NEW
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.*

No. 528 NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 9, 1907. **Price, Five Cents**

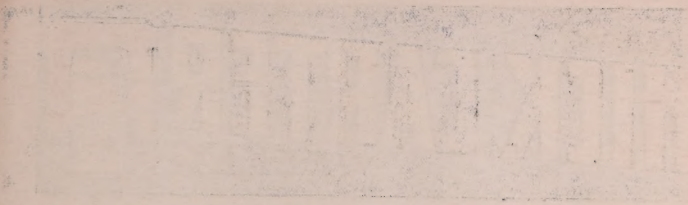
CLARICE, THE WOMAN DETECTIVE

—OR—

NICK CARTER'S TITLED ASSISTANT

By THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

The Frenchman made one last effort to regain his feet, and as he did so he managed to drag Nick against the low rail, and they both splashed into the water.



NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *70-80 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1907, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 528. NEW YORK, February 9, 1907. Price Five Cents.

Clarice, the Woman Detective

OR,

NICK CARTER'S TITLED ASSISTANT.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

DEAD—YET VERY MUCH ALIVE.

The wreck of a motor-boat was floating bottom up on the surface of Gardiner's Bay, at the eastern end of Long Island. The water around it was smooth; almost without a ripple.

Nowhere about it was there a sign of life save for one rapidly disappearing blot of black upon the green, and that was made by another motor-boat, which was being swiftly propelled in a westerly course toward Greenport.

The sun was just about to disappear for the day; twilight was almost upon sea and land, and only the faint chug-chug of the motor of the disappearing boat could be heard.

The wreck, which had been torn almost in half so that the two pieces of it clung together at the starboard side only by a narrow strip of the upper part of the hull, was practically motionless on the water, and the entire scene was one of abject repose.

But suddenly the silent thing that was once a boat began to heave and roll mysteriously. For a moment it rose and fell on the surface of the water, as if some mysterious force were beneath it; and then, as if by magic, the two parts of the wreck swung around so that the bow of one was abreast of the stern of the other, and from the aperture thus created a human head appeared.

Next there followed the shoulders and arms of a man; then half the body; and then, with great effort, which was evidently accompanied by considerable pain, the creature pulled himself bodily out of the water and presently seated himself astride the keel, where, with an expression of fury upon his face, which was turned toward the disappearing boat, he shook his fist savagely in the air.

"I'll get even with you, Nick Carter, for this!" he cried aloud, as if the man he was cursing might hear him and be therefore proportionately alarmed. "I'll get even with you for this, Nick Carter!" he repeated impotently, still with his fist vibrating in the air; still with his countenance distorted by rage. "I'll get even with every one of you. I will! I will! I will! With you, Nick Carter, for meddling with something which did not and does not concern you. For pursuing me like the hell-hound that you are! For wrecking my boat and making me an outcast! For the blow on my head which would have

crushed my skull if I had not been falling when it struck me.

"With you, too, Clarice St. Cyr de Morney—my wife in name only, but, nevertheless, my wife, by the laws of France! With you, Clarice, who have defied me and despised me from the first; with you, who will now reveal to Nick Carter the confession I made to you that it was I who murdered the old Marquis of St. Cyr. I will get even with you, my beautiful countess! I will pull you down into the mire! I will make you suffer ten thousand times worse than you have made me fall! Beware, Clarice, my wife—my countess, for I will get even with you for all that you have done!

"And with you, also, Chickering Carter, assistant to that other. I will pursue you, too, to the ends of the earth, if need be, to taste the sweets of my vengeance!

"And you, Henri de la Pierre—*you!* Ah, what will I not do to you when once I have you in my power? You, who have been my companion in crime, in all things, and who now betray me! You, who fled like a coward at the approach of real danger! You, who should have stood by me to the last, and who is, even now, acting the part of a traitor.

"I will know where to find *you* all right. Nick Carter will put *you* behind the bars, and I can wait for *you* till you come out into the world again; and when you do, I will strike you down with as little compunction as I would afford a poisonous spider."

He paused in his wild tirade and wiped the blood from his eyes, for there was an ugly gash over one temple, from which the blood was flowing quite freely, although the quantity of it was less with every minute.

After a little, an expression of cunning came into his eyes, and his lips parted in a grim smile, while he thought over the circumstances which had placed him in the present position.

"Nick Carter believes that I am dead," he muttered. "Clarice believes it; Henri believes it; Chick believes it. They all believe that I am at the bottom of the bay at this minute, lying among the seaweed down there."

He shuddered; then he laughed harshly.

"It is all the better so," he said then, aloud. "They think that I am dead; let them believe it true. They cannot know that I came up under the wreck of my boat, and clung there out of their sight, but with my head above the water and with air enough to breathe until they should take themselves away.

"But in the morning, when it is light again, Nick Carter will return here. He will search the place again. He will drag the bottom of the bay hereabouts for my body—but he will not find it. He will search the hulk of the wreck. He will do everything to find all that is supposed to remain of Count Raoul de Morney, otherwise, Bill of the Motor-boat.

"But he and they will find nothing. They will think that the tide has carried my body out of the bay into deeper water—*and they will go away satisfied.*

"But I am not dead—*not dead—not dead!*"

He almost shrieked these last words, and then he laughed aloud again.

He discovered presently that the tide was rapidly carrying him in the same direction in which the other boat had gone, and an hour later he leaped into the water and swam ashore.

The night was not dark, and he could see around him quite well; and although he knew nothing at all of his surroundings, he was a man who had all his life been accustomed to finding his way in strange localities.

He knew the general direction that he must take, and, although his clothes were dripping with the water of the bay; although he was hatless and without coat or waistcoat, he started rapidly away through the night along the point of land which is the northeastern extremity of Long Island.

His idea was to reach New York again with as little delay as possible, for it was now his desire to get as far away from his present surroundings as possible before the morning, in order that when the search was resumed for his body, as he believed it would be, there would be nothing to indicate that he had escaped with his life.

He had noticed, when he left the wreck of his boat, that the tide was turning, and he knew from that that the hulk would have floated again to the other side of the bay before it would be seen again by the searchers; and that it would never occur to them that he had been able to make a landing where he had.

He wished, too, for reasons of his own, to arrive in New York before Nick Carter or his friends could do so.

But he could not hope to travel without exciting curiosity in the plight he was in at that moment.

Soaked with sea-water; coat, vest, and hat missing; bleeding from a wound over his temple where the marine-glasses hurled at him by the detective had cut through the skin, and otherwise unkempt and disheveled, suspicion would at once be excited in the mind of any person who chanced to see him.

But he started rapidly away, nevertheless, along a road which his judgment told him should conduct him sooner or later to Greenport—to the very place where he had no doubt that Nick Carter and the others had gone to pass the night.

It was midnight when he passed a house that stood utterly alone beside the road, and he halted meditatively in front of it.

The question in his mind was whether he should break into it or not? If he could find in that lowly dwelling the sort of clothing he needed?

After a little he opened the gate and entered.

It was a small cottage house, with a low porch in front of it, and he stepped gingerly upon this, starting

mildly when the boards creaked under his weight, and listening to discover if the noise had roused anybody.

A dog barked inside the house; and it kept on barking incessantly. It was the voice of a small dog, and he felt no fear of it; moreover, he had picked up near the gate a short bar of iron, which he now held in his hand ready for instant use.

He waited, but there came no other sound save that made by the dog, which had now taken its position directly at the opposite side of the door before which he was standing.

"Strange," he muttered, "that the barking of that dog does not arouse the inmates of the house. I wonder if there are none? I wonder if the dog is there alone?"

He waited still a little longer, and then, with great caution, he raised the latch of the door and pushed it open two or three inches.

The dog, which was a fox terrier, instantly thrust its snout into the aperture thus created, and it indulged in a veritable paroxysm of barking; but De Morney, with one savage blow, brought the iron bar down upon the animal's head, crushing its skull and silencing it forever.

After that there was utter silence, and although the count listened for a long time, he heard not another sound.

Satisfied at last that if there were men or women inside the house they had not been disturbed, he pushed the door quite ajar and stepped inside.

Presently he discovered a lamp upon a table and, near it, matches; he lighted the lamp, and then another one, and still another; and after that he went from room to room until he had examined the whole house, and found not a human being present.

He judged, too, for his eyes were keen and his intelligence was alert, that a man lived alone in that house, and that for some unknown reason he happened to be absent for the night. Doubtless he had gone, leaving the dog on guard, and he had not thought it necessary even to lock the door in that unfrequented neighborhood.

The count smiled grimly to himself.

"I could not have found anything more to my purpose," he told himself; and he began at once to search the bureaus and the closets for the clothing he needed.

Half an hour later he was dressed throughout in clothing he found in the house, and his own besodden raiment was piled in a heap in the middle of the floor.

He had bathed his head and removed almost every trace of the blow he had received, and now he stood arrayed from undershirt and socks to collar, tie and hat in the clothing of the man who had gone away, leaving his little dog on guard over his household.

The clothing was of rough homespun, but it fitted him and it was sweet and clean—the Sunday clothes of a farmer, in fact, from boots to hat; and this last article was soft and fitted him exactly, so he pulled it low down over his forehead, the better to conceal the effects of that blow over his temple.

He found a telescope satchel also, and this he filled with a few necessary articles, wisely deciding that he must fulfil the part he was playing; at least, until he was well away from the neighborhood; and then——

Then, deliberately, he seized first one lamp and then another and hurled them against the walls of the room in which he was standing, so that they were crushed into bits, so that the oil from them was scattered everywhere over the room, and so that the flames from the wicks quickly ignited the oil and set the house ablaze.

Then he passed quickly outside, closing and latching the door after him, and he walked rapidly away through the night until he was among the shelter of neighboring trees; and there he paused and turned, smiling upon the havoc he had wrought, and gazing complacently upon the burning home that his ferocity had destroyed.

CHAPTER II.

THE ACT OF A VANDAL.

It was late in the afternoon of the day following the events just described when Nick Carter entered his own house in the city.

As he opened the door and stepped into the hall he paused in astonishment, for he found himself confronted by a scene of confusion such as he had never seen before in his own home.

The hallway looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

The mirror over the hall table had been smashed into bits; the table itself was hacked and marred so that it was fit only for a scrap-heap; the leather upholstery of the hall furniture had been cut into strips and the padding had been torn out and strewn upon the floor; the carpet was cut in many places, so that it would never be fit for use again, and the whole appearance of the place was indescribable.

The detective turned to Chick, who was directly behind him, and with an effort at self-control he said:

"It looks as if we had had a visitor in our absence, Chick."

But the house should not have been alone, notwithstanding his own absence: he knew that. It was true that both Patsy and Ten-Ichi were out of town; but Joseph should have been there; and Jannette, the housekeeper, and the cook, and——

He thought he heard a groan from the room at the end of the hall; the room which Joseph occupied as his own, from which he could attend to the door and answer to his master's wants as well.

Nick hastened forward and pushed open the door.

Joseph was lying upon the couch in that room. He was bound to it in the form of a letter X; a gag was between his jaws, and there was a huge swelling on his

forehead, where he had received a blow of considerable force.

It required only a moment to set him free, and instantly the detective demanded to know what had happened.

But Joseph could tell his master very little.

"It was shortly before noon to-day," he said, "when I went to the door in answer to a ring at the bell. A man stood there who looked like a farmer, and he asked to see you. I told him that you were not at home, and that I had no idea when you would return. With that, he stepped nearer to me, and then before I had a suspicion of what was to happen, he struck me on the head with a heavy cane he carried, and I fell.

"When I opened my eyes I was here where you found me; and that was exactly two hours ago. I know the time, because one of the first things I did was to look at the clock."

Nick looked at it also now, and discovered that it was a quarter past four. He discovered also that this room at the end of the hall had not been wrecked; nothing inside it seemed to have disturbed by the vandal.

"Describe the man to me as well as you can, Joseph," said the detective.

"Well, sir, he was quite tall; I should say six feet at least. He was smooth-shaven. He was dressed like a farmer who is starting for church Sunday morning. He had on a slouch hat, which was pulled down over his eyes. His eyes were blue, and his teeth were very white and even; also, they were rather large. Somehow, he looked as if he might be a foreigner, although he was certainly dressed like a farmer. His voice was heavy, but soft, and he spoke like a man of refinement. That is about all that I can tell you about him, sir."

The scene of wanton destruction which Nick Carter discovered when he went over his house was heart-rending.

There was not a room which the vandal had not visited and upon which he had not satisfied his thirst for destruction.

In the parlor the furniture had been hacked and destroyed; the carpet had been cut and ruined; the pictures were torn from the walls and smashed.

In the library, books had been torn from their bindings and scattered upon the floor; the drop-light and all the globes of the chandelier were smashed. In the music-room the wires of the piano had been cut and the rose-wood case had been deliberately chopped with a hatchet; the music was torn to shreds, and everything was wrecked and ruined, even to the pictures.

The second and third floors of the house were in the same condition. Furniture and decorations everywhere were utterly ruined; books were torn; ornaments were smashed; the aspect of confusion and wreckage was awful.

Jannette was found in her own room, just recovering from the effects of chloroform and bound and gagged as Joseph had been; the cook was in the kitchen, tied to her chair and gagged; and the two remaining servants were in a similar condition.

In all that house it seemed that there was but one room which the vandal had not visited at all, and that was only because he could not enter it. That was Nick Carter's study, wherein he kept his most valued treasures, and which he had provided with an outer steel door, which was always closed and fastened now, when he and Chick were both absent from the house.

Once, three years ago, this room had also been entered and an awful thing had happened in it, and since that time Nick had furnished it with the steel door.

And so it was that his study alone—and Joseph's small room at the end of the hall, which was of no importance—had not been wrecked by the vandal.

"Well," said the detective, when he and Chick had finished their inspection, and had gone to the study, "it looks as if I would have to refurnish, doesn't it? Eh?"

"Rather," said Chick moodily. He was so angry that he found it difficult to speak with calmness.

"I wonder who could have done it?" said Nick musingly.

"I wish I knew," replied Chick, gritting his teeth together. "I would have enjoyed entering the house while he was in the middle of his labors."

Nick nodded.

"I think that either one of us might have got a little satisfaction out of that," he said. "I wonder who did it?"

"To tell you the absolute truth," said Chick, "I have not the remotest idea. Have you?"

"No. I cannot think of an enemy—not a single one—who would have selected this form of revenge against me."

"It was evidently a chap who was not unmindful of the value of your silverware," said Chick. "I notice that he has helped himself rather liberally to that."

Nick laughed grimly.

"That, you know, might have been done for a blind," he said. "There are several other so-called 'clues,' Chick, that I have picked up. I suppose you noticed them?"

"Yes." Chick smiled. Then he added: "They are what Brynes used to call 'book clues.' The kind you read about, eh?"

"Yes. I have picked up a button that has dropped off a vest; a piece of cloth that was evidently torn from a coat; a silver ring that has sometime served for a wedding-ring, and which has engraved inside of it the legend, 'Jacob to Sarah, December, 188o,' which is about twenty years ago; and also an ancient wallet which contains two old twenty-five-cent 'shin-plasters.'"

"What do you make of all that stuff, Nick?" asked Chick.

"Why, I make it that the fellow left them behind him on purpose, simply to add to the mystification of the affair. If you will look at this button, you will see that it has been cut from a waistcoat, and not torn away by accident."

"Sure; I see it now."

"This bit of cloth, torn from a coat, has been torn away all right, but it is tough cloth, Chick, and the man tore it off purposely, for the sake of leaving it behind him."

"But there are the wallet and contents and the silver wedding-ring; what do you make of them?"

The detective was silent before he replied; then he said:

"I think that is somewhat different. I think that the ring and the wallet were both cast aside here for us to find, and that it was done only to mystify us the more; but, all the same, I have an idea that the wallet with its strange contents, and also that unusual wedding-ring, might be traced."

"But what of that? You would only find that the vandal had stolen the articles at some other place before he came here."

"That is quite true, Chick; but when he was here he was mighty careful to leave nothing but false clues; at the other place, no matter when and where it happened, he might have left a real one."

"That's so, by Jove!"

"However, I don't suppose there is any use in meditating upon it. The thing to do now is for me to invest in some new furniture."

"Do you mean that you are not going to make an effort to find the fellow who has done this thing?"

"I mean that neither you nor I have got time to attend to it now. I am promised to the inspector for to-morrow morning, and you must leave for Buffalo on the midnight train to-night. It will be a week before we can take up this case—even if we care to do so then."

"I care to do so—just as soon as possible!" said Chick.

"Very well. I won't object. You may go at it the moment you return from Buffalo; but that will be several days at least hence."

"I know it."

"Patsy and Ten-Ichi will be home the day after to-morrow. You had better write out full instructions for them about the Severance affair, for they will have to go upon that at once. That puts them out of the reckoning for this case. So you see, Chick, it looks as if our vandal must rest on his laurels so easily gained undisturbed; at least, until I have completed that matter for the inspector, and you have returned from Buffalo."

"I think, Nick, that you take it all mighty coolly."

"What would be the satisfaction if I got excited about it? What good would that do? I regret as much as you do—possibly even more—what has happened. There have been paintings destroyed that I prized almost above price; but they are destroyed, and regrets will not restore them to me."

Chick nodded savagely, and again gritted his teeth; after a moment, with some irrelevance, he said:

"I wonder if it is a dead certainty that the Frenchman was drowned, Nick?"

"De Morney?" asked Nick.

"Yes."

"Why do you hark back to that, Chick? I don't think there is the least doubt of it. He went over the side of the boat like a stone, when I flung the marine-glasses at him. The blow itself could not have injured him much, but it probably stunned him. He must have gone to the bottom of Gardiner's Bay, and the tide carried him away."

"If he happened to be alive, *he* might have done this thing," said Chick.

"Nonsense! *Nonsense!*"

"You think there is no possibility whatever that he escaped?"

"None. None whatever. You should realize that as well as I. Didn't we search everywhere for a trace of him? Wasn't the bay deserted at the time? He might have been tangled in the wreckage under his boat—possibly—but, even so, he would have drowned. He is dead, depend upon it; and even if he were not——"

"Well?"

"It is useless to argue the question at all, Chick. The man is dead."

"I have known people who were dead, to come to life again before now," said Chick, doggedly. "I remember a certain occasion when you did that very thing yourself, Nick."

"Oh, nonsense, Chick! If De Morney were alive, he could not have got here to do this thing; and if he could have gotten here, he would not have done such a thing as this. Come, we will go around to the Waldorf and get our dinner, while Joseph and the others are getting order out of this chaos. Come."

CHAPTER III.

CLARICE AS A WOMAN DETECTIVE.

When Nick Carter left the house he dropped the wallet and the other things he had found into one of his pockets, and he did not think about them again until when, later in the evening, he was seated in the presence of Clarice St. Cyr, otherwise the Countess De Morney, who it will be remembered was one of the persons against whom the "man of the wreck" had sworn such dire vengeance at the time of his escape.*

He had just finished describing to her the condition in

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 527, entitled "Clarice, the Countess; or, Nick Carter's Motor-boat Case."

which he had found his home upon his return to it; and now he drew the wallet from his pocket and showed her the ring of silver with the inscription inside it.

Clarice regarded it curiously.

"It is a wedding-ring," she said meditatively.

"So it would appear," replied the detective.

"And it looks as if it had been worn upon a person's finger many years, Mr. Carter."

"Yes; it does."

"This wallet is a man's wallet, is it not?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Have you examined the inside of it?"

"Not with any thoroughness. I merely saw that it contained in one of the pockets, two of our old shinplasters."

"What are shinplasters, Mr. Carter?"

"That is a name which people of this country gave to fractional currency, when it was in use," he replied.

"I understand. Did you notice that one of the pockets of the wallet shows the imprint of this ring, and that the ring fits exactly into the imprint?"

"No; I confess that I did not. I merely glanced at the thing, anyhow."

"It would indicate, would it not, that the man who owned this wallet, carried the ring inside of it for a long time?"

"Yes; I should say that it would indicate that much."

"Then, isn't it to be presumed that the ring was once the property of the wife of the man who owned this wallet? And that she is now dead and has been dead for a long time?"

"It would suggest that much, certainly."

"Do you mind my asking you these questions?"

"Not at all. You interest me."

"Then here is another one: If the wife of the man is dead; if he retained the ring—their wedding-ring—and carried about with him as a keepsake after her death, it followed that he was very fond of her, and, therefore, of the ring which reminded him of her, did it not?"

"Decidedly."

"The man's given name is Jacob, is it not?"

"So it would seem."

"Jacob would not readily part with that ring which his wife had once worn, would he?"

"No."

"The wallet which contained it was therefore taken from him by force, or he lost it. Is not one of those conditions likely?"

"Yes."

Nick was smiling now, for he was rather surprised that Clarice showed so much ability in the line of deduction.

"You have already told me," she continued, "that in your opinion, the man who committed those acts of vandalism at your house, purposely left these 'clues' behind him, in order that you would discover them, and so be misled as to the identity of the real perpetrator of the acts."

"Yes."

"Don't you think, in that case, that you might get on his track if you could find out who Jacob is?"

"It is quite possible, Clarice. Some time I will look into the matter, perhaps."

"Some time. Why do you defer it?"

"For the reason that I have other things of more importance to attend to just now. Have you never noticed that while a physician attends to the colds from which his patients are suffering, he goes about coughing himself?"

"Yes."

"That is my case. I cannot attend to my own case, just at present for the reason that I must give my attention to the affairs of other people."

"I see. This is rather a large ring, Mr. Carter."

"Is it? Oh, yes."

"It was worn by a large woman."

"Or a woman with a large hand—yes."

"It is a silver ring, too."

"Yes; I noticed that, Clarice." The detective smiled and she looked up at him and blushed.

"I suppose you think me very silly," she said. "The truth is, I was thinking aloud at that moment. I happened to remember that among a certain class of Low Germans I have heard that it is the custom to use silver wedding-rings altogether; even when the bridegroom has sufficient wealth to purchase a dozen gold ones."

"So you think that 'Jacob and Sarah' belonged to that class, do you?" asked the detective, smiling again.

"Isn't it a natural deduction?" she asked in reply.

"I cannot say that it is not, Clarice."

"Won't you help me in working this thing out? I am getting into deep water now."

"I should say that you are doing splendidly. You have gone a whole lot farther with the matter than I did."

"That is because you gave it very little thought."

"Possibly."

She was studying the wallet again now, with great earnestness.

"I don't think that this wallet has been carried in the pocket very much of late," she said presently.

"No? Why not?"

"I wish you would take it in your hand and study it for yourself for a moment."

"Nonsense! You do that for me, Clarice," laughed the detective.

"You are laughing at me."

'No, I am not. I am deeply interested; but I would rather that you would proceed as you have begun."

"Very well. I will try."

"Why do you think that the wallet has not been carried in the pocket very much of late?"

"For one thing, the leather is not worn as shiny as it should be if that were the case. It has been worn quite so, some time in the past, but now the gloss upon it, imparted from the wear against the inside of the pocket, has partly disappeared."

"Yes. Well?"

"For another thing do you notice how it is bulged out at the sides, and how it retains that shape, although there is nothing inside of it to hold it out so?"

"Yes." Nick was really surprised now; surprised because of her penetration. All of these things to which she called his attention, he would have seen and commented upon had he taken the trouble to examine and draw his own deductions from the condition of the wallet; but he had not done so. He had scarcely thought about it at all since the time he picked it up from the floor in his own house, save only when he had talked about it with Chick.

"Has it occurred to you to ask what has caused the shape of the wallet?" she asked, ignoring his apparent interest, now.

"You go right ahead the way you have begun, Clarice," he said. "I shall not venture an opinion upon the subject at all; but I am very willing to admit that I wish to hear yours, to the end."

"If the wallet has not been carried about by its owner of late, and if it contained the precious wedding-ring in one of its compartments, it follows that it has been carefully laid away for preservation, does it not?"

"Yes."

"Well," she went on, "in one of these pockets of the wallet, I discover very apparent evidences that coins have been deposited. I think they were heavy coins, and, therefore, they were probably gold. Are you listening?"

"With all the attention I have at my command; yes."

"So it is my opinion that Jacob was—or is—a careful old German, or Dutchman, who has all his life valued gold and silver money far above currency. When he wished to save money it was his habit to change what he possessed into gold."

She rose from her chair and crossed to the center table from which she took a magnifying-glass, such as amateur botanists like to use; then she returned, and with the glass, began a careful examination of the interior of the wallet.

Presently she raised her eyes to Nick's again.

"The middle compartment of this wallet has contained gold pieces," she said calmly. "A good many of them; as many as it would hold. Some of them have left the imprint of their size and shape upon the soft leather. You have some large gold pieces in this country, no?"

"Yes; the double-eagle; the twenty-dollar gold piece."

"Well, this compartment has been filled with them, I think. Now, do you gather any information from that, if it is a fact?"

"Yes; considerable. But I am listening to you, Clarice."

"'Jacob' has made use of this wallet as a depository for his savings."

"Yes."

"He has kept it hidden away in a bureau drawer, or between mattresses, or in some out-of-the-way place in his house, where he lived."

"Very probably."

"This pocket would have held, easily, twenty to thirty such gold pieces, with the strap around the wallet to hold the flaps in place."

"Yes."

"And if it had been hidden away like that, and only visited when there was another gold coin to deposit, such a fact would account for the shape of the wallet itself, now, wouldn't it?"

"It certainly would."

"Again, it must have remained thus a very long time, for it would take a man in his condition of life a good many years to save up between four hundred and six hundred dollars in cash."

"Wait a moment, Clarice. How do you figure upon his 'condition in life,' as you call it?"

"Easily. Our Jacob is a man past middle age. He is simple in his habits, poor in wealth, other than his savings which were in this wallet, and he is not at all a miser, for I can see plainly that he has never visited his hoard for the purpose of counting it, merely; but only to add another coin to his store. Shall I go on?"

"Yes, please."

"He was married twenty-five years ago, as the ring tells us. Doubtless he began to save at that time and selected the wallet as a place for his savings; hence he has been going to it every time he had a gold piece to deposit, for twenty-five years at least. If he had visited it oftener, for the mere joy of counting over what he possessed, the strap would have been worn badly; as it is, it shows very little wear. You said, Mr. Carter, that Joseph describes your vandal as a farmer-looking individual. Very well, I think that you will discover, if you make the effort, that Jacob was—or is—a farmer, also; and that the man who desecrated your house had recently visited his, and looted it."

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S TITLED ASSISTANT.

"Clarice," said the detective, "I have always said, ever since I have known you, that you had the detective talent. You are proving it now, certainly."

"Thank you," she said. "This case seems to have a distinctive interest for me. I don't know why, but for some reasons it appeals to me. I feel as if I were somehow personally interested in it. I can almost see

that old man, Jacob, before my eyes. I can realize how terribly he must feel at the loss of his ring."

"And his gold, also."

"His gold—yes; but if he is the man I think he is, he valued the ring far above the gold, Mr. Carter."

"Possibly; although that is hardly a German attribute."

"It ought not to be difficult to find out the identity of this Jacob," she remarked meditatively.

"No?" said Nick.

"It might be done by advertising in the papers; and yet——"

"Go on, Clarice."

"I was going to say that a man, such as he doubtless is, would scarcely read the papers in which you would advertise. I think he would be more quickly traced if we were to read all the country papers we could find, in the hope of seeing something about the robbery of a man whose name is Jacob."

"Clarice, you are a wonder. That would be exactly the way to do it—if only we had any idea what papers to read. But you forget a few things about it."

"I know that I do," she replied, with knitted brows. "That is why I want you to help me think. I am not used to this sort of thing, at all; and yet, I feel an unaccountable interest in this affair. What were you going to suggest that I had forgotten, please?"

"The multitude of country papers, from one end of the land to the other. The time that may have elapsed since 'Jacob' was robbed. The fact that he may be dead. That the robber might have murdered him in order to get the gold. There are a thousand and one other things, too, which would interfere in the search."

"If a search were easy all along the line, there would be no zest to the searcher, would there?"

"No."

"You said that you were going away, did you not?"

"Yes."

"When, and where?"

"Early to-morrow. I don't know exactly where, as yet, but probably as far as Chicago."

"Are you willing that I should give my attention to this matter while you are gone?"

"Certainly—always provided that you will not attempt to do too much."

"What do you mean by 'too much'?"

"I mean that I am quite willing that you should sit here and use your brains and your intelligence in this matter all you please, but that I am not willing that you should go outside and so run into any danger."

"I think I can promise you that I will not do that."

"Very well then. I will give you the case—until my return. I will appoint you my special detective right now, on this affair—the looting of Nick Carter's house, eh?"

"You are laughing at me again."

"No; I insist that I am not. I will be very glad to have you study over this matter until my return. I will be very glad if you will visit the libraries and read the papers, in the hope that you will somewhere read about 'The Robbery of Jacob.' I will, indeed."

For a moment she looked up at him with a strange expression in her beautiful eyes; and then, very quietly, she said:

"I will give my attention to it. You will let me keep the wallet?"

"Certainly. You may consider it as your personal property—until such a time as the rightful owner is discovered."

"Thank you; and the other things?"

"The button? And the bit of cloth?"

"Yes."

"What do you want with them? They are unimportant."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is quite evident that the vandal cut the button from the waistcoat in order to drop it on my floor, and it is also as evident that he deliberately tore the bit of cloth from the coat for the same purpose."

"Then, in that case, does it not follow that they are very important?"

"Perhaps so; but you tell me why you think so, Clarice."

"Because if you are correct about it, it seems to me that there can be no doubt that they were once parts of Jacob's clothing."

"Eh? By Jove! For once, certainly, you have hit upon an idea that had not occurred to me. How do you make that out, Clarice?"

"If the vandal had Jacob's wallet in his possession, he might also have worn Jacob's clothing. Certainly he did not wear his own, or he would not have left parts of it there for you to discover."

"Go on."

"Well, since the vandal went away with the clothing on his back, we cannot get hold of that, to have Jacob identify it; but Jacob might identify the button and the bit of cloth, as well as the wallet and the ring."

"First you catch Jacob, Clarice."

"That is what I intend to do—catch Jacob. The clue to this whole matter lies in finding Jacob."

The detective pondered a moment.

"And if Jacob happens to be dead, Clarice? Suppose the vandal murdered him before he sequestrated the clothing."

"In that case we will discover somebody who knew Jacob when he was alive—and Jacob's clothing, also."

"Upon my word, Clarice, you have succeeded in manufacturing quite a romance out of the affair. You have made me feel rather sorry that I cannot remain

here and assist you in unraveling the case; for, if I did [illegible] should be your assistant only, you know."

"I think, rather, that you should appoint me as special assistant for this particular bit of work."

"I will. Consider yourself hereby and hereon appointed," laughed the detective. "You are now, Clarice, the woman detective—my titled assistant."

"Please don't mention the title. I hate it."

"You should not do that. The title is all right, even if the man who bestowed it upon you, was not."

"*Is* not. I don't believe that he is dead."

"You do not?"

"No."

"Will you tell me what reason you have for making that statement?"

"A woman's reason; in other words, no reason at all. I wouldn't be surprised if he were at the bottom of this very affair we are talking about; if he were the vandal in question. It would be like him, I think, to seek some such revenge upon you as this."

"It is rather strange," mused the detective, "that Chick made almost the same remark to me."

"Of course," she continued, "there is no logic in my belief at all—I mean that he still lives; but I feel it somehow. It is intuition, I suppose; a woman's reason."

"If I had the least suspicion that De Morney were still among the living," said the detective seriously and gravely, "I would abandon this proposed trip of mine. I would not go away and leave you unprotected, just now."

She looked up into his eyes, smiling brightly.

"Do not fear on my account," she said. "I shall be all right. And, after all, it is foolish for me to suppose that he may be living when we have every proof, save the sight of his dead body, that he was drowned in the waters of Gardiner's Bay."

"And yet," said Nick; and stopped.

"And yet," laughed Clarice, "you must go away. I would rather you would go now, Mr. Carter. When you return to the city, you may come to see me again."

"Clarice," he replied, after another short pause, "I came to-night principally to extract a solemn promise from you."

Her face flushed and then became pale at his words, and she half-rose from her chair only to sink back upon it again; but, as his head was turned away at the moment, he did not notice these signs of perturbation.

"Extract—a promise—from me?" she repeated after him. "A promise about what? What sort of a promise?"

"When you went away the last time, you did so for some reason that you have not explained. You left behind you a note for Miss Glenn, and another one for me. You said in those letters that you went away because of your fear of your husband—of the count."

She made a gesture as if to stop him before he proceeded further, but he did not see it.

"I know exactly how you have felt about that man," he went on. "I know, or think I know, the horror you must feel whenever you were brought into contact with him. He is your husband—*was* your husband I should say—only in name. You parted with him forever within a few moments after the words were pronounced that made you his wife.

"But now, Clarice, there seems to be no doubt that the man is dead; nevertheless, what I wish to say, is this: Even if he should turn up alive somewhere, at some time—*even if he positively were alive at this moment and we knew about it;* I would want you to promise me faithfully that you will not fly from me again. Will you make the promise?"

"Yes," she replied, in a low voice.

"You will not attempt to go away again without my full knowledge?"

"No."

"And not without telling me so directly—by word of mouth?"

"No. I will promise you."

"Very good. Then I will go away content. Shall I write a line to you, Clarice?"

"No, no, no. I would much rather that you would not, Mr. Carter."

He raised his eyebrows in some surprise at her unnecessary vehemence; but he rose and extended his hand to her.

"Good-by, then, Clarice," he said. "Good-by for the present. I will not be gone more than a week at the most, and when I return you shall see me at once."

"Thank you," she said, in a low voice.

"Will you not bid me God speed?" he asked, smiling at her.

"God speed you—now, and always," she murmured; and then to Nick's utter astonishment, she turned quite away from him and crossed to the piano where, with her back still toward him, she seated herself upon the stool and began to play dreamily.

He went from the room and out of the house softly, leaving her so, for, while he did not realize what the emotion was that stirred within her soul, he was conscious of one within himself which bade him make a retreat before he said more than he felt he had a right to utter at that moment.

"I wonder if De Morney *is* dead?" he asked himself as he strode along the avenue a little later. "I wonder if the man *is* dead? By Jove, if it were not for that promise I made the inspector, I would start for Gardiner's Bay again to-night, to try if I could not make sure, one way or another. But as it is——"

It was an eloquent silence that followed, and during it he arrived at his home, and found awaiting him there a letter from that same inspector.

CHAPTER V.

CLARICE'S DEDUCTIVE SKILL.

We will have to give a short bit of attention to that note from the inspector which the detective found awaiting him on his return to his home. It was very short and very much to the point, and it answered the wish that Nick had made to himself while he was on the way to his house. It said:

"'My Dear Nick: That little matter of mine in regard to the Cruger millions, which you were to take up for me to-morrow, must be postponed for a time. I am called away to-night and cannot attend to it with you. Fortunately it is one of those cases which can wait, so I will ask you to defer activity in the matter until after I have communicated with you again, which will not be short of two weeks hence at the best.'"

There were some other subjects discussed in the balance of the letter; but this was the only part of it which greatly interested the detective, and so, as he laid the letter aside, he smiled and then asked himself just what course he should take.

"Shall I put into execution that idea that occurred to me while I was walking home?" he asked himself. "Shall I go to Gardiner's Bay and endeavor to make sure of one thing or the other, beyond the peradventure of a doubt? Shall I satisfy myself wholly, that De Morney is dead?"

He did not reply to the question in words, but he went about certain preparations soon after that which would have meant much to any of his assistants had one of them happened to be present.

No one was there, however, and so none saw his preparations; but the fact is that two hours later he let himself out of the house, with a grip in one hand, and he started away along the street on foot rapidly, without having left any word with Joseph, or with any member of his household.

And Joseph, who had been informed of his master's previous intention, had no idea that the plans were changed at all; and so, if anybody had asked at the house that night if Nick Carter would return, Joseph would have answered:

"Mr. Carter is away on important business, and will not return for a week."

In time, Joseph would have been almost entirely correct, although he would not have had the real truth in mind.

But Nick had gone on what was to him important business, indeed, for he had gone to make a thorough search for proofs of the death of Count de Morney; and he crossed the ferry at Thirty-fourth Street and took a train for Greenport, on Long Island.

It would be difficult to guess what he expected to discover there, for already he had exhausted every resource he could think of at the time, to discover the body of the man he supposed was drowned.

However, while in the presence of Clarice, the detective had discovered that it was of vital importance that he should know the truth, and now he was determined to find it out if possible.

And now, since we have been a witness to the temporary appointment of Clarice as assistant to the detective, it is necessary that we return to her, for, if truth must be told, it was largely because of her efforts that this story ever happened in a way that was worthy of relating.

As soon as she was certain that Nick had gone, she left the piano and returned to the chair where she had been seated while he was there; and for a long time she remained perfectly silent and still; but at last she smiled, and exclaimed aloud, although she was herself the only audience:

"What nonsense for me to dream like this! There is work for me to do now. Real work."

She took the leather wallet in her hand and fixed her eyes intently upon it, but, nevertheless, her mind refused to travel in channels subject to her will, and her thoughts reverted again to the man who was her husband and to the scenes that had taken place at Gardiner's Bay, in which they had each been participants.

She recalled the fact that she had been his prisoner in his motor-boat and that Nick Carter in another and a swifter boat had chased them all the way through the sound to the end of the island; that he had run down the *Starlight* just inside of Gardiner's Bay, and close to the shore of Plum Island; that he had dived into the water with her in his arms, after knocking the count overboard, and so had saved her from drowning; but more than all, he had saved her from becoming a victim of her own husband, who had stolen her away from the city, and who had sworn that she should be his wife in fact as well as in name.

"And then," she continued in her thoughts, "then we remained there a long time while search was made for the body of De Morney; then we went to Greenport, arriving there soon after dark; then we remained there through the night—Nick Carter, and Chick, and the police captain, and Henri de la Pierre who was a prisoner, and I; and then we returned here in the motor-boat, arriving here in the afternoon; and then——"

She broke off with an uneasy laugh and again raised the wallet until she held it before her eyes.

"Truly my mind wanders to-night," she said to herself, blushing vividly; for she knew only too well in her own heart why it wandered, although she was not prepared yet to confess it, even to herself. And then she did the wisest thing that she could do; she went to bed.

The following morning, however, when she went to

the breakfast-table, she found among the mail that was heaped upon the table—all of which she supposed was addressed to Miss Carmen Glenn with whom she was still living—a neat little roll that was addressed to herself; and as she looked at all in surprise, she remembered that the editor of the paper at Greenport had talked to her the evening of her rescue, and had told her that he would send her one of his papers which was to be issued that day, and which would contain an account of the affair in the bay.

In passing, it might be well to state that the editor was not told of the real name of the man who was supposed to have been drowned. He was only mentioned as "Bill of the Motor-boat"; but he had been told something about the rescue in the bay, and of the capture of the other man, Henri de la Pierre.

Clarice undid the wrapping of the paper with some eagerness, and she read the article it contained, from beginning to end.

It contained merely a rehash of what we already know, but it dilated upon the beauty of "Miss St. Cyr," who had been rescued by Nick Carter, etc., etc.; and Clarice put it down upon her lap blushingly.

But after a while she raised the paper again, and began to look through it carelessly.

As a newspaper, it was exactly like thousands of others we have seen; merely a country, weekly paper, nothing more. But there was a page devoted to "Locals," in which note was made of such interesting facts as "Miss Jerusha Smollet is spending a week in New York." "Sam Carpenter drove into town yesterday for half an hour." "Felix Codman cut his finger badly yesterday, and the doctor took three stitches in it."

She read all these with considerable amusement until she came to the last paragraph of them all, and then she stopped, waited a moment, and then read it a second time, and a third.

It would seem at first glance that there was nothing particularly about that paragraph to interest her, or to attract her attention; but we will repeat it here just as she saw it.

"Only a few moments before this paper went to press an item of important, though unfortunate, news came to us, and we lifted the form for the purpose of inserting it in this column. Jacob Krasse came into town yesterday afternoon to sit up through the night with a member of his lodge who is sick. Simon Berger, with whom he was sitting up, died at two o'clock, as we have noted in another column, and so, after calling the members of the family and notifying the undertaker, Jacob started home again about three in the morning, or perhaps a little sooner than that, for he had chores to do at daylight. At all events, when he got home there wasn't any home there. It had burned down during the night. That is, the house had burned down, entire, but the stables and other outbuildings were spared by the flames, there being no wind at the time to help them along. Everything in the home was destroyed, even Jacob's little fox-terrier, of which he was very fond. The house was insured, but Jacob says that it contained some keepsakes which he would not have parted with for twice all that the house and contents were worth. We feel sure that everybody will sympathize with Jacob, who has lived alone there ever since he lost his wife, now more than ten years ago. He has our sympathy, surely."

It was the name of the man who had lost his home by fire that night which attracted the attention of Clarice. It was "Jacob."

Suddenly Clarice leaped to her feet and clapped her hands together.

"I know! I know! I know!" she cried out excitedly. "It is only my intuition that tells me, but I know that I am right."

Then she seated herself again and picked up the paper. She read the article through twice more, and then put the paper aside.

"I don't suppose that Nick Carter would put the slightest faith in my reasoning, if he were here with me now," she told herself presently, "but I am just as sure as I can be that the Jacob Krasse who lost his home by fire, night before last, is the owner of that wallet and the silver ring—and the button and piece of cloth, too.

"And what does it all mean, if he is the owner of the things?" she asked herself in some alarm; and she replied to the question without hesitation.

"It means," she murmured, "that somehow, Raoul de Morney did escape with his life. It means that he managed to get ashore. It means that he saw that house and broke his way into it. It means that when he found it deserted, save by that little dog, he killed the dog and afterward robbed the house at his leisure; and it means that after he had robbed it, he set it afire in order to cover up what he had done.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, after another pause; "it means even more than that, too—it means a great deal more than that. It explains exactly how it *all* happened. Let me think. Let me think. Let me try to put myself in Raoul's place for a moment.

"Suppose he did escape—and now I *know* that he did. Very well, he was soaked to the skin. He had probably lost his hat. More than likely he had thrown away his outer clothing while he was in the water, and, if that is so, he was practically naked when he made the shore.

"Of course. That is it. And he had to have clothing. He had to escape somewhere, and he couldn't go anywhere, without proper clothing. Of course. And so he stopped at the first house he came to, to rob it.

"Then he went inside. Probably he awakened the

dog, and by the actions of the dog he discovered that the owner of the house was not at home. Then he broke in and helped himself to the farmer's clothing—all he wanted; and he looked for things to steal; and he found the wallet, with one pocket filled with gold.

"And then he must have figured out that if Nick Carter learned that he was alive, he would never be safe, and so he just left his own clothes—that is what he had left of them—in that house with the body of the dog and then set it afire and left.

"And now I can see through it all—just as plain! Certainly! To be sure.

"How Raoul must have hated Nick when Nick ran him down and wrecked the *Starlight*—and took me from his clutches. If I were a man I would be willing to bet a great deal that he shook his fist at our imaginary backs and swore eternal vengeance upon all of us.

"And then when he escaped; when he got safely away; then he had provided himself with dry clothing—some's clothing—and lined his pockets with gold, I can almost see him as he hurried to the station to take a train for New York. Doubtless he passed—or dodged—poor Jacob Krasse on the road. And all the way to New York on the train the villain was meditating how he would get even with the people he hated—*and he thought of a way.*"

She paused and put back a stray lock of hair from her brow.

"There is one thing that not even Nick thought of," she told herself, then. "He never once thought that the man who would dare to visit his house in the city and commit such acts of vandalism, *must have known positively that Nick Carter was not at home—and that he could not get there in time to interfere. Only Raoul de Morney was the one who did know both those facts.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THINGS MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD.

Clarice lost no time after she arrived at these conclusions. She swallowed her breakfast in haste, and then, after leaving a note for Miss Glenn in which she explained that she had suddenly been called away for the day, she hastened from the house, crossed the ferry as Nick Carter had done a few hours ahead of her, and took a train for Greenport. She was only four hours later than the detective himself, but she had no idea of that fact; neither had he.

After he did one more thing before she crossed the ferry and took that train.

She happened to remember that now she would be well known in Greenport, and she did not fancy that part of any disguise; so, before she went to the ferry, she sought out a famous hair-dresser—and she spent almost an hour in one of the private rooms of that establishment.

When she came forth again even Miss Carmen Glenn would not have known her had she met her on the street.

The raven hair had disappeared, for it had been deftly concealed beneath a matronly wig of gray blonde arranged in the hair-dresser's most masterly style. Enamels and rogue, powders and pigments, pencils and touches of other things here and there had so altered her general appearance that, although a person might have noticed some resemblance about her to the Clarice whom we know, no one would ever have taken her for the genuine Clarice.

She was quite proud of the achievement when she looked at herself in the mirror before departing from the hair-dresser's rooms; and then, having paid the bill, she hurried to the ferry and the station.

"Greenport!" called the brakeman at last; and she descended to the platform of the station and looked wonderingly about her, scarcely knowing what she should do first.

And then a happy thought struck her.

There were three hackmen—surreymen would be the proper term—about the station, and, having selected one who looked more intelligent than the others, she approached him.

"How much do you charge by the hour?" she asked.

"I wish to take a drive about the country near here."

"A dollar and a half an hour, ma'am," he replied.

"Very good," she said. "That will be satisfactory. Do you know where Plum Island is?"

"Lord bless ye, ma'am, you can't drive to Plum Island. There is half a mile or more uh water between that and the p'int."

"What point?" she asked.

"Oyster Pond p'int, ma'am."

"Very well, drive me out toward Oyster Pond point. Do you know the road?"

"Know the road! I've lived along it all my life."

"Do you know the people who live along the road? That particular road, I mean?"

"Yep. All of them, from the grandpaps down."

"Are there any places along there for sale, or to let?"

"I don't think so."

"Tell me the names of some of the people who live along that road. I wish to be sure that I am going in the right direction before I start," she said.

"If you would tell me who you are looking for——" he began; but she interrupted him.

"Answer my questions, please."

"Well, there's old Poppy Ingalls; there is Chris Christophesen, and Jake Krasse, and Derick Vandevendeer, and——"

"Oh, that will do. Drive that way, anyhow. Later I may wish to go in another direction."

"We had a fire down this way night before last," he

said to her, looking back from the front seat of the surrey as they were driving out of the village.

"Yes?" she replied, as if she were not in the least interested.

"It was down this road, too; toward the point."

"Yes?" she repeated.

"Jake Krasse was burnt out."

"Was he? Did he lose much?"

"Everything that was in the house—and, between you and me, he must have had a lot. Some folks say that he had saved up a lot, and that he kept it all in the house. If that is so, it must have been all burnt up. His dog was burned, and——"

"How did the house catch fire?"

"That is the funny thing about it. Jake swears that there wasn't a mite of fire in the house anywhere when he left it, and that he always keeps his matches in a covered tin box so that rats and mice can't get at 'em. He swears that the house was set afire."

"But who could have done such a thing?"

"Nobody, ma'am. It's all rot to say that it was set afire. Jake must have left some fire around somewheres and it caught. That's all about it."

"Probably."

They drove on in silence after that, save for questions about the surrounding country which Clarice asked now and then in order to keep up her appearance; and, at last, they came in sight of the ruins of Jacob Krasse's house, still smoking hot.

"That's it, ma'am," said the voluble driver. "And there is old Jake, standing there, looking at it."

"Stop the horses and let me get out," said Clarice. "I am going to speak with him, poor man! I feel very sorry for him. Wait here where you are, driver, and don't leave the horses for a minute on any account, for I should be in mortal terror lest they should go off and leave us here."

"There wouldn't be no fear of that, and——"

"My orders are that you remain here in charge of the horses," she said sharply, as if she were indeed fidgety about them. "I have engaged you by the hour at one dollar and a half an hour, and I expect you to do as I ask while you are in my employ."

"Oh, all right, ma'am. I'll stay by the horses, all right. But they wouldn't start. That off one has to have a log-fire built under him before he'll start, some horses. He's one of the kind that stands without hitching."

But Clarice barely heard him, for already she was approaching the silent and motionless figure of the man who stood beside the ruins of his home, so absorbed in his own thoughts that he was entirely unmindful of the near approach of anybody.

The whole attitude of the man was pathetic—even the stoop of his shoulders held something of sorrow in the droop of them.

And he started when the low, calm voice of Clarice addressed him.

"I am very sorry for you, Mr. Krasse," she said.

He looked at her with keen eyes, from beneath his bushy brows, and then, with scant courtesy, he replied:

"I don't know why you should be. I don't know you, and I don't see how you happen to know me."

"I only know that you are Mr. Krasse, and that you have met with a great loss. I repeat that I am very sorry for you."

"Thank you. I know that you mean kindly enough; but all sorrow likes to be alone with its mourning, all the same."

"Please do not drive me away from you," she said. "I have some things that I want to say to you, Mr. Krasse."

"Have you? I can't imagine what it can be."

"Will you tell me what you have lost besides the house and the furniture?" she asked.

A cold smile crossed his face, and he replied:

"I lost some gold, if that interests you. After the ruins have cooled off I will dig around there till I find it. It couldn't burn up. Do you want to know how much there was in my hoard?"

"No. I have no interest whatever in the gold. I did not mean gold, or the value of gold, when I asked you what you had lost beside the house and the furniture."

"No? Didn't you? What did you mean?"

"You looked to me as if you had lost something that was far more precious to you than gold; that is why I asked."

He started a little and looked at her keenly.

"Folks been talkin' to you?" he asked shortly.

"No," she smiled back at him.

Now, there was always something bewitching about the smile of Clarice, and even this old man, older now than his years, troubled and suspicious, fell a victim to that smile.

"There are some things in life, ma'am, that are more precious than gold," he said slowly. "Memory of one you have loved and lost is one of them. That house was lined with memories. The walls were papered with memories. The colors in the carpets sang memories to me. The wind under the eaves and the raindrops on the roof whispered memories to me. I was a middle-aged man when I married, and she who came to me was yet a young woman; but she loved me, and I—I worshiped her, madam. Everything in that house that has been destroyed spoke to me of her. I could sit at my fireside at night and believe that she was with me still. The people around here think that I am strange, because I have clung so to her memory, but it has been my greatest joy. And now, because it has been burned

away—this house which spoke to me so eloquently of her—I am almost heartbroken."

"And there were things of hers, too, in the house, were there not?" asked Clarice, with tears in her own eyes over the sorrow of the man.

"Aye," he said. "Many of them. I used to take out the blankets and air them, just as she used to do; and I always aired her clothes, and folded them once in a while, just as I know that she would have done. Losing the house and all her things in this way is almost like the other great sorrow coming back to me again."

"And you had a little dog, too, didn't you?"

"Yes. Poor little Jim! He was burned to death inside the house—because he couldn't get out, I suppose, unless——"

"What were you about to say, Mr. Krasse?"

"I was going to say unless he was killed. You see, ma'am, I can't believe that the house took afire of itself. There wasn't any fire in it anywhere. I always kept the matches covered, so's the mice couldn't get at them. I think that somebody broke into the house and set it afire, and, if that is so, whoever did it had to kill Jim before he could go very far. And, besides, there is another thing that makes me thing it was the work of a robber."

"What is that?"

"There was goings on out yonder in the bay that night. A detective from New York was down here after two men. He caught one on 'em, but t'other fellow got away. They said he was drowned, but I reckon he got away and crawled out along the beach somewhere. If that is so, he broke into my house, robbed it, and then set it afire."

"If that is so, Mr. Krasse, he probably found and stole the gold you mentioned."

"Yes," replied the old man sadly. "But I could spare the gold—about five hundred dollars there was—if only he didn't take something that was in the leather wallet with the gold."

"Will you tell me what that was, Mr. Krasse?"

"Yes. It was *her* wedding-ring. When she died she wanted me to promise to take it off her finger, and to keep it always to remember her by, she said. It was in that wallet with the gold. Maybe I'll find it in the ashes, along with the gold, and, although it will be melted, it will still be her ring; but somehow I can't get over the idea that I have been robbed as well as burned out, and that the thief stole that ring with the other things. That is why I am waiting here—to search for the ring as soon as the ashes are cool enough."

For a moment Clarice made no response to this; but then very slowly he drew the wallet from the folds of her skirt, opened it before his astonished eyes, and, with the ring plainly in sight from where he stood, she extended it toward him.

CHAPTER VII.

CLARICE UPON THE TRAIL.

Clarice was to discover in that moment that he was a strange character—this man with whom she had to deal.

His first expression when he saw the wallet was one of intense astonishment, and in the midst of that he seized upon the article that was extended to him, and for a moment he stood like a statue, feasting his eyes upon the silver ring it contained; but next he raised his eyes to hers, and there was an angry flash in them as he demanded:

"Where did you get this? Where, I say?"

Instead of replying directly to the question, she now produced the bit of cloth and the button that Nick had given her.

"Are these yours, also?" she asked.

"When you have answered my question, ma'am," he responded quietly, "I will answer yours."

"Will you listen to me quietly, without interruption, until I have told you the whole story?" she asked him, and he nodded his head in the affirmative.

Then she produced the paper that had been sent to her from Greenport, and she directed his attention to the article it contained about him; and then she began at the beginning and related the entire story just as it had occurred, telling him that she was the woman who had been rescued from the motor-boat—relating, in fact, the entire chain of her own cogitations on the subject of the ring—until at last he began to nod with understanding.

When she had finished he smiled at her for the first time.

"You have made it all very clear to me, ma'am," he said then. "I cannot tell you how very grateful I am to you for returning the ring. That bit of cloth has been torn from my best Sunday coat; the button is from the vest that goes with it. It is all good proof that the man came here after he escaped from the water, and that he first robbed my house and then burned it."

"Yes," she said.

"Up in the village, at the photographer's, there is a picture of me that was taken with that suit of clothes on me," he said. "Maybe that might help you in following the man. Do you think so?"

"Yes; I think it would," she replied.

"Well, when you go back I will ride with you. We will go to the photographer and get the picture. It was taken a good many years ago. I was younger then—

but it isn't the picture of me that you want; it is the picture of the clothes. You wouldn't believe it, maybe, but that suit of clothes was made more than twenty-five years ago."

"You need not come with me," she said. "I will get the picture. I would prefer that you do not accompany me, for I don't wish it known that I have been here at all. I don't wish it known that I am seeking the man. Will you keep the secret?"

"Certainly, ma'am. Will you come here to see me again some time, please? You have done me a great deal of good to-day."

"Yes. Some time I will come."

"I shall rebuild the house, just as it used to be," he said dreamily.

He gave his attention again to the smoking ruins, and she turned silently away, entered the surrey, and was driven back to the village, much to the astonishment of the driver; but she quieted his remonstrances by telling him that she would pay him for a full half-day if he would take her to the photographer and then to the station.

It was almost dark when she was again in New York City, but she felt greatly elated by the result of the day's work; and, having called Carmen Glenn over the phone to tell her that she was all right and would be at home presently, she went at once to the house of the detective.

Joseph greeted her at the door, without in the least knowing who she was, for her disguise was almost perfect; but he was accustomed to disguises, and when she told him her identity he showed not the least surprise, but ushered her into the house, at the same time apologizing for the condition it was in.

"Never mind that," she said to him. "Mr. Carter told me that you had at least one good look at the man who did all this havoc, and that you thought he looked like a farmer."

"Yes," replied Joseph. "He had on a slouch-hat that was pulled down over his eyes, and his clothes were very old-fashioned."

"Turn on the lights, Joseph," she said. "I have something that I wish to show to you."

He complied, and she produced the photograph and held it out to him.

The instant he looked upon it he uttered an exclamation of surprise and said:

"Why, miss, it is the very man himself!"

"You the face?" she replied.

"Well, maybe not the face, only it is enough like it to almost make me think so. But in every other way it is the same."

"What time of day was it, Joseph, when he appeared here?"

"It was about noon—a little before, I think."

"Joseph," she said, "I want you to fix your mind directly upon the moment when you opened this door in reply to his ring at the bell."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You must have seen past him into the street. You are trained to be observant."

"Yes."

"What did you see that was beyond the man—in the street? Was there any sort of a conveyance at the door waiting for him, or was there one in the act of driving away? One that might have brought him here?"

"Yes, ma'am; there was."

"Describe it to me. Tell me about it."

"It was a hansom, miss. It was just in the act of turning away from the door when I admitted the man. I remember that I thought then that it had brought him, and that I was on the point of telling him that he had better call to it to wait for him, since Mr. Carter was not at home; but the next minute he was inside, and then I was struck down."

"Thank you, Joseph. That is all. I will go now. You need not mention the fact that I have been here until I give you permission to speak."

She went away, and, finding a cab at the square, she had herself driven directly to the main offices of the New York Cab Company, for she argued to herself like this:

"When De Morney arrived in the city he came via the Thirty-fourth Street Ferry—at least, that is the natural assumption. He took a cab, of course, for the reason that he wished to avoid observation as much as possible.

"On his way to the city in the train he had made his plans for the wrecking of the home of the detective. He argued to himself that Nick Carter was away; he knew that Chick was with him, and either he knew that Patsy and Ten-Ichi were also absent, or he did not fear them.

"At all events, it is certain that he decided to go directly to the detective's house.

"Now, he appeared at the house at a quarter to twelve, or near that time, and so he must have arrived by the 11:30 train from Greenport. It is not likely that he would have taken the cab on the Brooklyn side of the ferry, and therefore if I can discover what cabs were in waiting at the New York side for arrivals from that train I am likely among them to discover the particular driver I wish to see."

Another person might have wondered what good she would do her, since Joseph had said that the cab left the man at the door and drove away without him; but it was by no means certain that he had done more than to turn his horse around, or to walk him through the

street, while awaiting the return of his fare. Anyhow, she wished to find him, if possible.

When she entered the office of the cab company she said the clerk who was on duty:

"I wish to see a driver—if there is one about the stable now—who was at the Manhattan side of the Thirty-fourth Street Ferry yesterday at the time of the arrival of passengers from the 11:30 train on the Long Island Railroad."

"Burke!" called the clerk over her head; "this lady wants to talk to you;" and he turned to other duties, while the man called Burke came forward, with his hat in his hand.

He was a young Irishman, very much alert, with a kindly, pleasant face and shrewd eyes.

She drew him to one side, and then she asked him:

"Burke, were you at the ferry at Thirty-fourth Street about half-past eleven yesterday?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She hesitated for a moment, in doubt how to proceed; then she continued:

"There was a passenger who came over the ferry at about that time—between eleven and half-past—who took a hansom and was driven to Madison Avenue, near Twenty-ninth Street. Here is a photograph of him—at least, it looks very much like him, enough so that you would recognize it if you had noticed the man. Look at it and tell me if you saw him."

Burke took the picture, looked at it, and shook his head.

"No, ma'am," he said. "I didn't see the man. I had a look for a passenger. She was among the first to come off the boat, you know."

"I suppose," said Clarice, "that you personally know all the drivers who were there at that time, don't you?"

"Well, I know who they are, ma'am."

"If you will find me the man who had that passenger I refer to I will give you five dollars."

"Huh!" said Burke. "That is dead easy. Will you wait here a minute?"

She nodded and he disappeared. After fifteen minutes he returned.

"It wasn't any of our cabs that had him, lady," he said. "But if you are willing to pay for the hire of a cab a little while I think I can find him for you."

When she was getting into the cab Burke said to her:

"I know of two drivers who were there with hansoms who don't drive for this company, lady, and there's likely to be one on them. We will go to the most likely one first, for sure Mike O'Toole is the divil himself for getting fares away from the others."

They drove to Twenty-second Street, on the East side, where Mike O'Toole was most found, and the policeman he hailed as the photograph he said:

"Sure! I had him—and a divil he was for chucklin', too."

"Where did you take him?" asked Clarice; and O'Toole gave the address of Nick Carter's house.

"I suppose he sent you away then, telling you not to wait for him, did he not?" asked Clarice.

"He did not. Sure, he told me to drive to the next corner and wait there for him; and it was what I did. Is it asking me to tell you all I know about him that you're doing, lady?"

"Yes; and here is something for your trouble," and she pressed a bill into his hand.

"Sure, lady, that makes my memory good, so it does. Well, I waited for him at the corner, as he told me to do. It was a quarter to twelve when he got out of the cab; it was a quarter to one when he got back into it, so he was gone exactly an hour."

"Where did you take him then?"

"To Paddy the Pig's."

"Where is that?"

"Sure, it is Paddy O'Brien. He's on Sixth Avenue. It's a saloon, lady—not the sort of a place where the likes of you would care to go, lady."

"Do you remember what time it was when you left him there, O'Toole?"

"I do that. I have to put down me time on a pad that I carry. I didn't hurry after I took him into the cab again. It was ten minutes past one when I left him at Paddy's."

"Is that all that you know about him?"

"It is, lady."

It was now eight o'clock in the evening, and Clarice was both tired and hungry, so she directed Burke to take her home; but as she dismissed him, after paying him for his services, she said to him:

"Burke, I want you to come here after me with a coupé at one o'clock to-morrow; and in the meantime you are to say nothing whatever about this affair. Good night."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMAN DETECTIVE IN PERIL.

We will return to Nick Carter himself after a little, but just now it is our duty to continue with Clarice, for this was really her first case—her first case as a detective.

She believed that she must be very systematic in her work, too, and before she retired to rest that night she went carefully over everything that had happened to her that day.

And she was not without some self-congratulation for the success of her efforts.

She had definitely established the fact that Edward de

Morney had not been drowned; that he still lived, and was as much a menace to her personally as ever.

Strangely enough, with all her shrewdness, it did not at once occur to her that one of the first things he would do would be to place a watch on the house where she lived, in order that he might lay his plans for getting her once more into his power. She did not think of her own personal danger in the matter at all. She was so absorbed by what she was accomplishing that she forgot all else.

Burke came for her at one o'clock the following day, as he had been directed to do; and now, without any disguise whatever—for she did not suppose that she would require one in what she had to do this day—she told him to take her directly to Paddy O'Brien's.

Burke looked rather astonished. He hesitated. Then he said:

"Sure, lady, you don't want to go there, do you?"

"I certainly do," she replied.

"Well, it ain't the place for the likes of you, beggin' your pardon for me boldness in saying it, lady."

"I don't intend to go inside," she said. "You will do that for me. O'Toole said that it was a saloon, didn't he?"

"He did. It is. Faith, and it's more than that, too. Paddy's all right. He's a white man, and he sticks by his friends through thick and thin; but I ain't sayin' as much for some of that same who are his friends. It's no place for you, lady."

"Is not the same bartender who was there yesterday at this hour likely to be there now?" she asked.

"He is."

"Couldn't you bring him out to the cab to talk to me?"

"I could, sure; but he would tell ye nothing."

"Wouldn't he talk to me?"

"Not a worrud that you'd want to hear, or care to hear. And if he told ye anything about the man you're after, sure, it would be all lies."

"You mean that he would be afraid of betraying one of his friends?"

"The same—or one of his customers. Sure, it's all the same thing. He'd say that he did not know the man at all, at all, even if the spalpeen was leanin' over the bar at that blessed minute and drinkin' wid him."

"Then what am I to do? I want to trace that man. I wish to find out where he went and to follow him."

"May I ask you a question, lady?"

"Yes."

"Is he a crook?"

"Yes," replied Clarice.

"Do they know at Paddy's that he's a crook?"

"I don't know. I never heard of the place until last night."

"Sure ye didn't. I forgot that."

"Drive me there, at least," she said. "When we get there call the bartender out. Tell him that a lady wants to talk to him. Perhaps he will come."

"Sure he'll come out. Faith, we couldn't hold him when he knows that a lady wants him; but if there was a hundred of him, and each av him came out a hundred times, sure he'd tell ye nothin' that ye wanted to know. However, we'll go there and see what comes of it."

"We can, at least, make the trial," she said.

When the coupé stopped in front of the door of the saloon Clarice looked at her watch, and discovered that it was exactly at the hour at which O'Toole had left De Morney there, if he had been correct in his relation of the time. Burke leaned in at the window of the carriage before he entered the saloon, and he said to her:

"Sure, there is wan gentleman in the place. That isn't sayin' that they're not *all* like him, but I happen to know that wan. His name's Ed. If he's there—which isn't likely, because he works nights—I'll call *him* out; and with your leave, lady, I'll stay inside meself while he's out here, just to hear what the others'll be sayin' during the time of it."

A moment later Clarice saw rather a handsome face at the window of the coupé, and a pleasant voice said to her:

"Did you wish to speak to me, madam?"

"Yes," she replied, throwing one of her bewitching smiles upon him. "Pardon me, but is your name Ed? I heard no other name, so I am obliged to make use of that one," and she smiled upon him again.

He was visibly affected by her beauty, by her soft voice, and by that matchless smile of hers, which none could resist, and he replied:

"I am Ed. What can I do for you, madam?"

"Were you here yesterday—no; the day before yesterday, I mean—at this hour?" she asked.

"If you had stuck to your first question," he smiled back at her, "I should have been forced to say no, but, as it is, I can answer yes. I was here at this hour the day before yesterday."

"There was a man who entered that saloon at ten minutes past one on that day," she said. "I want to know if you saw him, if you know him, and if you can give me any idea where he can be found now."

"Ed" laughed somewhat uneasily; then, with startling frankness, he replied:

"No, madam, I did not see him, I do not know him, and I have not the least idea where he can be found now."

Clarice opened her eyes in amazement at this ready response: then she exclaimed:

"*But,* you do not know to whom I am referring!"

"No; but the answer would be the same. That is why I made it as I did. I would even prefer that you should not describe the man to me."

"One would suppose——" she began; but he interrupted her.

"What one *should* suppose," he said, "is that one of the first principles of our business is never to give information about our customers. If we did that we would soon have no customers at all. I can make only one suggestion to you."

"Will you tell me what that is?"

"If the man you seek came here the day before yesterday at this time of the day he is likely to come here again. If you should keep a watch on the front door, or have a watch kept there, sooner or later he would probably make another appearance. Then you could have him followed. Will you excuse me now?"

"Wait a moment," she said. "I want you to look at this."

She thrust the photograph into his hand before he was conscious of what she did, and she watched him keenly as his eyes fell upon the card.

"I observe that you *did* see him," she said quietly.

"Yes," he replied, returning the picture. "I was here when he came. I have no interest in the man. I know nothing about him at all save that he has visited the place several times; but I can honestly say to you that I know nothing more than that about him."

He was silent a moment, and then he added:

"I do not like the man. There is nobody here who has any particular love for him. He has not been exactly on the square with all his friends, I have been told. If I knew anything about this man I think I would be willing to tell you. If I knew what your interest in him is——"

He stopped, and she bit her lip. Then the eternal feminine came to her rescue, and by a word, almost, she appealed to his chivalry—and she won him.

"He is my husband," she said, with perfect truth. "I want to find him."

"Your husband! That scoundrel? I beg your pardon, but that is exactly what he is, madam. Pardon me, but are you telling me the truth? I ask because—well, because this is not exactly a picture of him, you know—or, at least, you ought to know."

"It is not a picture of him at all," said Clarice. "It is only a picture of the clothes he wore at that time. His name is Raoul de Morney. He is a French count. He is also sometimes called 'Bill of the Motor-boat.'"

"I see that you *do* know him. Madam, I am sorry——"

He stopped suddenly in what he was about to say, for he saw her start, saw that her eyes were looking over and beyond him, and then she said very quietly:

"Thank you very much, Mr. 'Ed,' for your courtesy to me. I will not trouble you more. The man I seek has this moment gone inside of the saloon. He is there now."

"Then you will not need me further, madam?"

"No. Thank you again."

He was turning away, when he paused suddenly and returned to the window.

"You say that the man is your husband, and I do not doubt you, although I am sorry that it is so," he said. "But do you know much about him?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Then perhaps it is unnecessary for me to tell you that he is a dangerous man. I happen to know that much. I should advise you to beware of him. I should advise you to return to your home, or wherever you are staying, and send some man out to find him, instead of making the search yourself. Good-by."

He raised his hat and turned away. A moment later he entered the saloon and disappeared.

And then Clarice was in doubt what was best to do. She wished that Burke would return, but when minute after minute passed and he did not come she became very nervous.

Ten, fifteen minutes passed, and she was about to leave the coupé, when the door of the saloon was thrown open, and Burke—as she supposed—dashed outside, ran to the coupé, leaped upon the box without a word to her, and, seizing the reins, drove rapidly away.

Clarice was astonished. She was also somewhat frightened.

Her first thought was that Burke had got into trouble inside the saloon and had been driven from it by De Morney himself; and she was dimly conscious of the fact that others had appeared at the door after him—one, a man without coat or hat, who also looked strangely like Burke in the one glance she had of him, and another the man "Ed" who had talked so courteously with her.

Her idea was that they were in pursuit of Burke, who was now on the box and driving like mad through the streets, as if he feared pursuit, so she sat perfectly still and waited.

They turned into Thirty-seventh Street, going west. They crossed Broadway, and from there to Seventh Avenue the coupé swayed from side to side with the speed it was put to.

Through Seventh Avenue they sped to Thirty-eighth Street, where they again turned toward the eastward, but only a short distance.

The coupé was driven up close to the curb and brought to a stop.

Clarice heard Burke, as she supposed, leap to the ground, and the next instant his face appeared at the window.

Then she forgot herself and uttered a cry of affright.

The face that peered in upon her through the open window of the coupé was not Burke; it was Raoul de

Morney himself, alert, cool, handsome, implacable, sneering—triumphant.

He wore Burke's coat and Burke's tall hat, and he carried Burke's whip; but otherwise he was plainly the Count De Morney, and she wondered, even in that instant, how she could have been deceived for a moment.

She parted her lips to utter a scream, but already he had the door of the coupé open in his grasp, and before she could utter a sound he reached inside and seized her by the throat.

CHAPTER IX.

A DANGEROUS MAN TO MEET.

Clarice was conscious of attempting to cry out her alarm, and of being unable to do so because of the clutching fingers that were about her throat.

She struggled, but she was like a babe in the grasp of the man who had seized her, and she remembered dimly, even at that moment, his great strength, his dare-devil propensities, his implacable and relentless spirit for evil.

She did not lose consciousness. She knew that she was lifted from the coupé and carried up a flight of steps which she judged to lead to the front door of a house. She knew, also, that the horse started on again along the street.

One hand was still at her throat, and she was rapidly losing consciousness; and then it occurred to her that if she pretended that she had fainted he would cease to choke her.

With this idea in mind she ceased her struggles and permitted her form to relax in his grasp, just at the very moment when the door of the house opened and closed behind her, and she realized that she was once again in the power of her husband.

Husband! How she hated the word. It had no meaning for her at all, save of terror. Terror and horror.

He carried her into a room that opened from the hall—a room which was dark, for the blinds were closed and the curtains were drawn.

She felt that she was put down upon some sort of a couch, and that he was standing over her, looking down upon her in the dim, uncertain light, for there was very little light in the room, only that which came in through the open door.

She kept her eyes closed, although she was obliged to breathe; but when he called her by name she made no reply, hoping that he would believe, in the darkness, that she was quite unconscious.

Evidently he did so believe, for after a moment he left her quite alone and crossed to one of the windows, where he drew the curtain aside and opened the slats of the inside blinds, peering out as if to discover if he were followed.

The room smelled musty, as if it had been a long time closed and unused, and she dared to open her eyes half-way and peer around her.

She saw very little, next to nothing at all.

It was just an ordinary room, very plainly furnished. The carpet was worn almost threadbare; the few chairs that she could see were in even a worse condition; the walls were bare. Evidently it was an untenanted house, partly furnished.

Then she heard him approaching her again, and she closed her eyes resolutely and held her breath, all save the faintest possible respiration.

"Clarice," he said softly.

She did not reply.

"Clarice," he repeated.

He bent down then and placed his head close to her lips, and she held her breath while he did so. Then he raised one of her hands and felt of her pulse.

The act almost drew a responsive shudder from her, but she controlled the impulse. Then he dropped her hand again beside her and stood up straight.

"She will come around in a few moments," she heard him say; and then, for the second time, he left her side, and this time he passed from the room into the hall, softly closing the door after him.

Instantly she started to her feet and flew to the door, where she placed one ear against it and listened.

But she could hear nothing at all. If he were doing anything he did it silently.

She waited a considerable time, and then, no sound coming to her, she turned the knob of the door and tried to open it—but only to discover that he had turned a key that was at the opposite side, and that she was locked in the room.

Again she listened, and again no sound coming to her from beyond the door, she turned and looked rapidly around her to find some means of escape.

The room was quite dark now, but her eyes had become accustomed to it, and, moreover, there was the faintest suggestion of a gleam that stole in at one of the windows where the curtain that covered it was partly torn.

Instantly she crossed the room to that window, and in going she seized a chair and carried it with her.

With one hand upon the curtain, she hesitated. She knew that the roller would make a sharp and sudden sound if she should release the spring to raise the curtain.

She remembered in that moment that burglars, when they are entering a house and find themselves confronted by a curtain, cut it across with a sharp knife in preference to raising it. She had no knife at her disposal—nor any other weapon, in fact, which she now regretted—but she possessed an expedient. It was a woman's expedient—a pin.

She leaped upon the chair. She folded the curtain back against itself and pinned it, so that the lower half of the blind was exposed.

To unfasten the catch was the work of an instant.

When she drew back the shutter a flood of light rushed into the room, almost blinding her for an instant—and she saw that two men were at that instant approaching the house along the street—that they were, in fact, almost in the act of passing it.

Then she gasped, for she recognized both of them.

One was Burke, still without coat or hat: the other was the man "Ed" with whom she had talked in front of the saloon on Sixth Avenue.

Her lips parted to call to them, when she realized that they would not hear her.

She raised one hand to pound upon the window-pane, when she realized that her captor would assuredly hear that sound.

Then she seized the half-moon catch of the window at the top of the sash and with feverish haste pushed it aside.

Fortunately, it swung easily from its place, and, with almost a cry of gladness, she applied her strength to the window in an effort to raise it.

It would not move at all, and she was almost in despair, when she saw that a nail had been driven into the casing above the sash at the side.

She seized it. It came out readily in her grasp. It was only an extra fastening, long in use evidently, so that it had worn a hole of its own in the wood.

Again she applied her strength to the window, and this time it yielded.

The window shot upward; the weights inside the casing knocked together noisily: the window creaked and groaned terribly—and at the same instant she heard a noise behind her which she knew was made by the turning of the key in the lock of the door through which her captor was seeking to return to her.

But the window was up. The way of escape was open before her. Burke and "Ed" were now directly in front of the house, so rapidly had the warlock at genius swept.

She stooped. She placed one foot upon the sill of the window. She drew up the other one. For a fraction of an instant only she paused there.

"Burke!" she called. "Ed!"

Then she jumped.

They turned at her call. They saw her leap through the space to the flagging of the area below, a sheer fall of eight or nine feet. They saw two arms outstretched to aid her to seize her, and then saw that grasp fail in its purpose.

De Morney saw it at the same time. He had just reached a point near her before she jumped.

Now he leaped out for an instant.

Clarice was slowly and somewhat painfully rising to her feet again after the fall; the two men to whom she had called were running toward her.

De Morney placed one hand upon the sill of the window and sprang lightly through the opening. Even now he was not daunted in his determination to keep possession of her.

He alighted beside her just at the instant she regained her feet, and he reached out his hand to seize her, when he was seized from behind.

In an instant he turned upon his assailant, who was Burke, and, grasping him around the body—for he was too close at hand to strike with any effect—he lifted him clear off his feet and flung him against the iron railing that was around the areaway.

Burke fell senseless to the ground, but even as he did so "Ed" flung himself upon De Morney, striking out with his fists and crying out as he did so:

"Run, madam, *run!*"

Clarice did not need a second bidding. She ran.

She knew that the men were fighting fiercely together, but she could see others approaching the scene of the fray. Her only thought was to escape from De Morney.

A policeman was approaching her, and she ran directly to him.

"Get behind me! Quick!" she heard him say, and as she obeyed him she saw that in some way De Morney had gotten rid of "Ed" and had not hesitated to tackle the arm of the law in the person of the policeman in his fury and chagrin.

She saw that De Morney's nose was bleeding where "Ed" had struck him, and over the two men who had already grappled she saw "Ed" running toward them, with blood on his face, as well.

Then, before "Ed" could arrive upon the scene, the policeman uttered a groan and fell to the flagged walk, and De Morney leaped away from his latest victim, dashed up the steps of the house from which she had so lately escaped, leaped from the steps to the window-sill, sprang inside, closed the window after him, and so disappeared.

She found herself—she scarcely knew how—assisting the officer to his feet; she saw that he was bleeding and that he was very pale; but he had courage, too.

Pushing her aside, he rapped with his club for assistance. Then he called to the men who had rushed to the scene to assist him, and he led the way up the steps to the door of the house.

"Batter it in!" he ordered. "The fellow cut me. Somebody tie my arm up, so that I can help. It is only a cut. Stop the bleeding, if you can."

He managed to throw off his coat, and it was Clarice who seized a handkerchief from one of the men, which she twisted into a rope.

In the meantime "Ed" had approached, and now he

took the twisted handkerchief from her grasp and wound it tightly around the officer's arm, using a pencil from his own pocket as a tourniquet to draw it tight.

Somebody had brought an ax in the meantime, and already the door was yielding to the attack upon it; and just as the policeman's arm was in shape again it fell open with a crash, and the crowd, one man after another, dashed inside the house.

In the meantime two more policemen had arrived on the scene, and now they swarmed into the deserted house, while the one who had been wounded leaned back against the railing of the steps, pale and weak from the loss of blood.

"Gee, but he was a vicious brute!" he said weakly. "Who was he, lady?"

"Bill of the Motor-boat," she replied, quickly realizing that that name was known to the police.

"Gee! Is that so? Thunder!" and, forgetting his wound, he also dashed into the house.

But the officers and their willing helpers only had their trouble for their pains. Their prey had left by way of the roof, and it was evident that he had already taken a sure way of escape, for, although the block was searched from end to end, not a trace of him was discovered.

He had managed to make good his escape.

Then Clarice turned to "Ed" and to Burke, who had now got to his feet again.

"I don't know how I can thank you enough," she said to them. "But for you—but for your aid I don't know what might have happened to me, gentlemen."

"I do," said Burke. "You'd have been murdered—that's what!"

"And," said "Ed" quietly, "unless you are very careful somehow——"

"I know," she said, interrupting him. "I will be careful. Thank you again."

CHAPTER X.

THE OFFICIAL DRAG-NET.

"My usefulness seems to be about over," said Clarice, calling upon Nick Carter that evening, for he had quite unexpectedly appeared at her home and was seated in the parlor facing her. He had just entered, and they had not yet exchanged confidences about the events that had happened since their parting. "I thought you were through again," she added.

"I didn't go there," replied the detective. "I went to headquarters instead."

"And you, indeed? Did you make any discoveries?"

"Yes," replied Nick, laughing. "Several."

"Perhaps you will be so good as to tell me what they were."

"I found out that De Morney is still alive; that he was not drowned; that he made his escape from the water, and that he committed some havoc in the country around there before he took a train for New York, where he made his first call at my house."

"Yes?" said Clarice.

"I discovered, also, that a very charming woman with blond gray hair, although with a very young face, had also been to Greenport, and had returned to a certain Jacob Krasse a wedding-ring that he had lost. I have been wondering ever since who that young-old lady could be."

"As if you did not know."

"How in the world did you do it, Clarice? How did you know so much that you went directly to him and found out much of the truth even before I had got upon the right track? And I was on the ground hours before you were, too."

"I knew who I was going to see before I left the city," she replied. "I went there purposely to call upon Mr. Krasse."

"He told me about the paper you showed him—with the account of the burning of his house; but how did you connect him with the ring?"

"His name is Jacob."

"So it is."

Then, from the beginning, Clarice told the detective everything that had happened, and he listened to her in utter amazement.

"You certainly are a detective—a natural detective," he said when she had finished. "You did mighty good work, too, in tracing him by means of the cab-driver, although it was somewhat risky to follow him to a saloon; don't you think so?"

"It proved so—certainly."

"Well, Clarice, I want you to turn over the entire case to me now. You have done your part, and I don't wish you to attempt to do any more. There is only one thing for you to do now—at least, until I have landed De Morney safely behind the bars."

"What is that?"

"It is to remain religiously inside this house until I give you permission to go outside of it. De Morney is a constant menace to you. He is an ever-threatening danger to you. He means to inflict definite harm upon you, and in the event of his failure to capture you and take you away somewhere he will not hesitate to—it is a hard word, but you have the courage to hear it—to murder you."

"I know it. I am quite sure of it," she replied.

"The man is desperate now. He knows that he has confessed his crime in France; he knows that he will have short shift if ever I get my hands upon him again, and he will not hesitate at anything now."

"You are right about that."

"I have already cabled to Paris, to the secret police

there, that I know the murderer of the marquis, your father. When I have captured De Morney it will not be very long before he is taken to France to answer there for his crime."

"You will find him a hard man to catch, Mr. Carter. He did not hesitate to-day to attack two men at once, and then, when he knew that others were near to interfere, he did not hesitate to stab a policeman."

"I know. We will not discuss that. The point is, Will you do as I request?"

"About remaining indoors?"

"Yes. Absolutely so."

"Yes. I think so."

"I want you to promise me."

"Very well. I promise."

She was silent for a moment, and then she said demurely:

"Is not mine a strange position for a woman to be placed in? I am a wife without being a wife at all. I have a husband who is not a husband at all. I sit here and plot against a man whom the law and the church which married say I must cleave to all my life, and my most fervent wish is that he may be brought to his just deserts and made to answer for the crimes he has committed."

"Yours is an unusual case, Clarice," said Nick. "But it will all come right in the end."

"It is very wicked, is it not, to wish for the death of any man? How much more so must it be, then, to desire the death of one's husband. I am, truly, very wicked. But I do. I wish with all my heart that he were dead; and until I know that he is I shall not feel that my own life is worth a day's purchase."

He was silent, and she added:

"Tell me what you are going to do now, Nick?"

The name slipped out before she was aware of it, for he always thought of the detective by his given name; she always spoke of him so when she communed with herself, and she blushed vividly.

"Oh, forgive me!" she exclaimed.

"If you will always address me in that way—yes," he replied. And then, before she could make another remark, he went on rapidly:

"I don't know exactly what I shall do now. I shall attempt to find De Morney and arrest him, of course; but if you ask me just how I shall proceed about it I cannot answer."

He rose then to take his leave, and she followed him to the door.

"You must be very careful," she said as they were parting. "You are in greater danger than I—Nick."

"Yes, possibly; but I am used to danger," he smiled back at her. "It is the way of my life, you know. Good night."

When he left the house he walked to the corner of the street above it, where he found a man standing idly gazing about him, as if he were waiting for somebody to appear.

"All right, Terry," said the detective. "I came to see that you were at your post. Did the inspector tell you exactly what I wish you to do?"

"I am to watch the house, sir; that is all, isn't it? And to stop anybody who attempts to visit it, no matter who they may be?"

"Yes. Find out exactly who every person is who attempts to enter that house, day or night, until you are called off the job. You must use your own judgment as to who you let pass without much question. Good night."

He turned then and went to the other corner, the one below the house, and there he found a second man, also sent from headquarters at his request, whose duties were to be the same.

From there he returned to his own house, where, after a word or two with Joseph, he went out again, saying as he was leaving:

"A regular drag-net is to be put out to-night, according to the methods of the regular police, Joseph. I have never tried it myself, but if De Morney is in the city he must be found. I will return about daylight, or a little before. Good night."

The "drag-net" to which he referred was a method which the police have of running a man to earth and capturing him when haste is necessary and when there seems to be no definite method of finding him by stealth.

For example, if De Morney had been a criminal who was well known in New York he would have had certain resorts which he frequented, and through one of these it might have been possible to get upon his track, either through finding and following him, or by dogging the footsteps of one of his associates.

But "Bill of the Motor-boat" had no associates—at least, none who were known— in the city of New York. The usual methods would not avail as against him, and so the "drag-net" was to be put out against him.

In an expedition of this kind every precinct in the city assists.

All the extra men, and always the best men, are detailed by each captain to search through his particular precinct, house to house, almost, and to go into every resort where a criminal may conceal himself.

Every "stool-pigeon" is warned that he is to assist; every known criminal who is at the moment at liberty and who can be communicated with is warned that if he loves his liberty he had better assist in the good work also.

At eleven o'clock the game begins; the extras go out; they enter saloons; they visit at every conceivable place where crooks are known to congregate, or where they might by any possibility get together; they approach

each other from different sides and different ends of the precinct or district they are searching; and this is going on all over the city at the same time; from one end of the metropolis to the other during the same hours.

It is like the teeth of a fine-tooth comb raking the city—and few there are who get through it unquestioned and unexamined if the policemen are in earnest about it, and if they "haul the drag-net" seriously and honestly.

But, nevertheless, there are those who are sufficiently cunning, even without assistance, to get through the meshes of this net and make their escape, just as there are criminals who are never caught at all and who die in their beds at the last without ever having seen the bars of a prison from the inside.

The detective went at once to headquarters, where he was presently closeted with the inspector, and from whose office the arrangements for the night were to be directed; and he thought—he believed, indeed—that he had placed sufficient safeguards around Clarice to insure her safety.

For, although he had pretended that her telling of her experience was the first information he had on the subject of the events of the day, he was, nevertheless, fully aware of those letters he went to see her—and he knew that this night to come she would be in danger from that husband of hers, if ever there was a time when he would threaten.

The daring of the man was phenomenal. He seemed not to hesitate at anything, no matter how foolhardy it might be, if it were necessary to carry his point.

As soon as he arrived at headquarters and closed the door of the private office behind him he went to the telephone and called up Clarice, and when she answered he said to her:

"Is this Clarice! This is Nick. I thought it would be well to let you know where I will be for some time to come—at least until after midnight."

"Yes," she replied. "Where are you?"

"At police headquarters. If you should happen to need me at all, for any reason, don't hesitate to call me up."

"Yes," she said.

"All you will have to do to get me will be to take the receiver from the hook, and when central answers say that you want police headquarters—quick. Then ask for me."

"Yes. But why are you so anxious? Do you believe that I shall want you? Is anything particular threatening?"

"No."

"Perhaps I shall call you up, anyhow, just to say good night to you before I retire," she said wistfully.

"Yes, I wish you would. Promise me that you will do this very thing."

"I'll think about it," she said, and left the telephone.

But at half-past two o'clock in the morning, when the last fruitless report from the "drag-net" was received, Nick Carter suddenly remembered that Clarice had *not* called him up over the phone to say "good night."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST TRAIL.

He did not mention the sudden fear with which this recollection had filled him, but he parted with the inspector rather hastily, and, instead of directing the cabman who was awaiting to take him to his home, he told him the address of the house where Clarice lived.

"I don't think much of your 'drag-net' business," he said at parting. "However, because it has failed this time it does not follow, of course, that it always fails."

He stopped the cab at a point some distance from Miss Glenn's house and walked the rest of the way, for his first desire was to see and talk with the two men he had left on guard.

But he found very soon that they were both missing—both gone.

Thoroughly astonished at this, he hurried to the house, and paused for a moment in front of it while he asked himself if he would do right in rousing, and perhaps startling, them all at that hour of the night.

He was forced to ring the bell several times before he received a reply, and then at last the butler came to the door, yawning prodigiously, and he peered cautiously through a crack at the detective while he inquired what was wanted.

But he recognized who his caller was, and opened the door to admit him.

"Has anything happened here to-night?" asked Nick.

"No, sir."

"I did not hear you take down the chain-bolt before you opened the door. Did you forget to put it up before you went to bed?"

"It seems to be broken, Mr. Carter," was the reply. "I felt for it, but——"

"Broken? Let me see it."

The merest glance told the detective that the chain had been cut, and not broken, and he turned again to the butler.

"Somebody has been here, Paul! Somebody has entered the house since you retired. What is the matter with you? Why are you yawning so prodigiously?"

"I don't know, sir. I can't seem to keep me mouth shut, and my head aches terrible."

"Paul, you have been drugged. I can smell the chloroform in the air. Come now. Wake up, man, and do as I bid you."

"Yes, sir; what is it?"

"Go at once to the room of Miss St. Cyr. Tap against

the door. If she does not answer immediately go inside—turn on the lights—wake her up, if she is there. Hurry!"

Paul was awake now, and he ran up the stairs in haste; but inside of two minutes he was back again.

"She isn't there!" he gasped. "The room is in disorder! I don't know what has——"

But Nick did not hear all that he said, for already he was half-way up the stairs, taking two at a time—and Paul followed him.

"Go and wake your mistress—wake Miss Glenn," Nick said to him. "Ask her to come to me here as soon as she can. Don't tell her what has happened, for we don't exactly know yet what *has* happened."

Clarice's room certainly was in disorder, although the bed had not been slept in.

It was mussed somewhat, and one of the pillows showed the impression of a head that had rested upon it, as if Clarice had thrown herself down before disrobing for the night; but one of the chairs was overturned and broken and a small table at one side had also been wrecked.

Then, happening to glance toward the mirror, Nick discovered that a penciled note had been forced into the frame of the glass. Evidently the writer realized that Nick would not be long unaware of what had happened, for the note was addressed to him.

Just as he seized upon it and was about to read Paul returned at a run, and his face was now as white as chalk.

"She is gone, too!" he cried out.

"What do you mean?" demanded the detective, startled.

"Miss Glenn has gone, too. She is not in her room. The room looks as if there had been a struggle there, too, same as this one. Oh, sir——"

"Wait," said the detetctive. "Wait till I read this note."

Then he read:

"I have stolen a march on you, Carter. It doesn't matter how. I am not a brag. This letter is intended as a warning. You will know by this that I have taken my wife away with me. You may know more for all that I intend to keep her. I have taken Carmen Glenn with her, to keep her company—and incidentally, to make her pay the price of her good money for the privilege of returning later on. The warning is this: *If you make another single effort to find me, or to hunt me down, I will kill Clarice!* I mean it, and you know that I do."

The note was not signed. It was not at all necessary that a name should be appended to it for the detective to know who had written it.

He folded it and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to Paul.

"What time was it when you closed the house?" he asked.

"After midnight, sir."

"How long after midnight? Be explicit."

"Half an hour."

"How long after that was it before you went to sleep?"

"It must have been all of an hour, if not more, sir."

"Why?"

"I was reading. It was after one when I put out my light."

"Did you hear anything or know anything after that time?"

"No, sir."

The detective looked at his watch.

"It is half-past three now," he muttered. "De Morney has had about two hours' start, or very nearly that. Say that he got away from here at two, that would be an hour and a half. Hello!" he added. "There is some one at the front door. See who it is, Paul. I will follow you."

It was Terry—one of the men who had been supposed to watch on the corners—and he was out of breath from running.

"Well?" said Nick sternly; "where were you? You were not at your post when I returned a little while ago. Explain, if you please."

"There was a man came up behind me. Before I knew it he tackled me, and he was as stout as a moose. He threw me down and tied me up as if I had been a baby. Then he tossed me over the fence into an ash as if as if I had been a bag of meal, and he doctored me with a sponge at my nose until I went to sleep. I suppose he served Shrively the same way."

"Go on," said Nick. "How did you get loose, and why have you been running?"

"I got loose because when I realized that he was chloroforming me I managed not to get too much of the stuff. When I came to I managed to get the cords loose from my wrists, and then I took 'em off my feet.

When I stood up I saw a hack at the curb in front of this door, and I saw a man just putting a woman inside the hack. The hack started just as I made the discovery, and I took after it. That is all I know."

"You mean that you lost the hack? That you have no idea where it went?"

"Yes. It went too fast for me. I couldn't follow it. I followed it to Madison Square, but there I lost it."

"How long ago was that, Terry? The last you saw of the hack?"

"Not more than half an hour, sir."

"And which way was it headed?"

"It turned past the north end of the square. That is all I know about it."

"Could you see the number of the hack, or the driver, or anything about it that you could recognize?"

"Not a thing. Not a single thing."

"All right. You had better go and look after Shrively. You will probably find him in about the same plight that you were in. After you have done that you may go home. Don't talk now, and don't try to excuse yourself. I don't think there is any excuse for your carelessness."

The detective went back into the house. He wandered about it for a while, going from one room to another, but each time finding himself back again in the room that Clarice called her own.

He at last he decided that this sort of inaction could do no good. Both the young women were gone, and the only trace of them he had was that the hack which took them away had been last seen between Madison and Fifth avenues, at the north end of Madison Square.

He could not understand why De Morney should also have abducted Carmen Glenn, for he had no belief at all in that statement made in the note that he intended to hold her until she should ransom herself from his power. He believed that there was another and a deeper motive than that.

And then it occurred to him what that motive might be.

He recalled that once, not so very long ago, De Morney had sought to induce Clarice to join with him in a plot to steal Miss Glenn's millions by impersonating her, and doubtless this was the idea he had in mind now.

"So it was possible," thought the detective.

For once in his life the detective felt himself strangely baffled. He did not know what to do, or which way to turn next. There seemed to be nothing to do and no direction in which he could turn with any hope of picking up that lost trail before morning—or even then.

After a little he went outside the house and seated himself on the steps, waiting for the dawn to appear. He wished to think, and he believed he could think there as well as in any other place.

He lighted a cigar, and he smoked it slowly to the end, consuming in that manner more than an hour more; and the dawn was just breaking, and he was just about to cast away the stump of the cigar and rise to his feet again, when a hack, furiously driven, dashed around the corner below him and came to a sudden stop directly in front of the house.

A tall young Irishman threw down the reins and leaped to the ground.

"Who is at home here?" he demanded breathlessly.

"I am," said Nick, now risen to his feet.

"Who are you?" demanded the Irishman.

"Nick Carter. Why?"

"God be praised! Come with me, sir, if you would save the two of them! Get into my hack."

"Wait. Tell me——"

"There isn't any time."

"We'll take time. Tell me where you are going."

"To a canal-boat, sure; no less—where the two ladies are this minute. Prisoners, too, in the hands of that dirty spalpeen who near done for the purty lady this afternoon—yesterday afternoon it was—over in Thirty-eighth Street. Me name is Burke, sir, if ye will have it all before ye start to the rescue. I was drivin' up-town afther returnin' from takin' a fare to the Williamsburg Bridge, when who should I pass on the street but O'Toole——"

"Who is O'Toole?"

"He's a driver like meself, sir. I passed O'Toole a-drivin' like the devil was after him, and who should I see leaning out of the windy of the hack but the divil who trun me against the railin', and, sure, I heard him shout to O'Toole.

"'Drive, damn ye, drive!' says he. 'To the foot of Dolan Street!' says he. And then, as the hack flashed past me, I saw the face of the purty lady, wid the electric light from an arc-lamp shinin' on it; and at the same instant I heard the man say: 'It's a canal-boat: the name is Alcatraz.' No more, sir. I knew instantly that the spalpeen had kidnaped wan the lady away again, and

that he was takin' her to that canal-boat he talked about. Neither him nor O'Toole saw me, for they was lookin' at each other, and, not knowing what to do, I drove here first to see if the lady was missing—in order to make sure. And I found you here! God be praised!"

CHAPTER XII.

BROUGHT TO BAY AT LAST.

A canal-boat!

Surely De Morney was resourceful, for who would have thought of looking in such a place for the fugitive with his captives?

We need not describe that drive to the pier where the canal-boat was to be found. It is sufficient to say that had it occurred at any other hour of the day than when it did the horse would have been halted a dozen times, for Burke did not spare the animal at all.

And when at last they came to the head of the pier and Nick leaped from the hack Burke followed him.

It was broad daylight now—and out in the river, directly opposite where they stood, there could see a tug with a single canal-boat hauled to its side, headed down the river toward the Battery, and making great speed, with the tide in its favor.

A human derelict was idling against the bulkhead of the pier, and Nick tossed him a quarter; then he pointed toward the boat in the river.

"Did that boat just leave here?" he asked.

"She did, mister."

"Do you know the name of the canal-boat?"

"*Bessie*. I saw it on her stern. She's gettin' light as you see, sir. She ain't got no cargo at all—just two women for ballast. Peaches they were, too."

"Darn," said Nick. "I wish we could head that boat to the Battery."

"*If you could catch a Second Avenue electric, sir.*"

"Try it."

Nick leaped again into the hack, and the tired horse was made to run for the elevated station, which he reached just as a down-town train was pulling in at the platform, and as the *detective* brandished up the stairway heard somebody pounding him, and, looking over his shoulder, saw Burke still in his wake.

"What did you do with your horse?" asked Nick.

"Gave a poor man two dollars to drive him slowly to the stable," was the reply.

They caught the train, and when, later, they arrived at the Battery the detective knew that they had beaten the tug with its tow by several minutes.

There are always tugs to be found in the slip that is close to the ferry-house, and Nick had no difficulty in discovering one to his purposes. Steam was up and she was ready to cast off at any moment.

"It is twenty-five dollars in your pocket if you will take me out to that canal-boat yonder," he said, pointing to the object of his remark. "I want to board it and I want you to make fast and stay by me till I tell you to go."

"Get aboard," said the captain of the tug. "I'm your huckleberry, mister;" and when they were away from the dock he added: "I'll run around under the stern and come up behind them. When I do that you and your friend here must be ready to leap aboard, with ropes in your hands to make fast. I don't keep but one deck-hand, and he's gone to his breakfast, and my engineer can't leave his post."

"All right," said Nick. "We'll attend to the ropes. If you do your part well, captain, I may be inclined to add something to that twenty-five. Now, Burke!"

"Yes, sir."

"You and I will keep out of sight until the crucial moment arrives. Captain?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you can manage to get alongside of them without giving them the alarm it will all be just that much easier."

"I'll try it," was the reply.

They went out upon the river slowly, and the captain headed the *Taurus* against the tide until he had passed the other tug with its tow; then he came about quickly and rang his bell for full speed ahead.

Nick and Burke remained out of sight until they were directly abreast of the canal-boat, which, being "light," towered out of the water beside them; but then, at a word from the captain, they both made ready to take the leap.

The moment came at last, and the captain called out: "*Now!*" and in an instant the detective, followed by the hack-driver, leaped upon the deck of the canal-boat with the ropes in their hands, and in another moment they had made them fast, and [illegible]

The boat [illegible] seemed to be deserted, or, at least,

there was no one near to offer them hindrance; but now, when they appeared upon the deck, the tug at the other side began to blow its whistle, and a man made his appearance, attempting to climb on board.

But he found himself looking into the muzzle of a revolver, and the stern tones of Nick Carter told him that it would be a whole lot healthier for him to stay where he was; at the same time Nick ordered Burke to cast off the lines which made the other tug fast to the canal-boat.

"Come, Burke!" he called then, and he dashed toward the cabin at the stern of the boat.

But even as he did so De Morney made his appearance suddenly in front of him, and he saw and recognized Nick Carter instantly.

All his caution, all his care for the prisoners, and every thought of escape for himself seemed to desert him at that moment, and he remembered that here before him, on the same deck with him, was the man he hated.

If he saw the revolver in the detective's hand he paid no attention to it. Either he did not fear it, or he did not believe that Nick Carter would use it against him.

With a savage shout, he rushed forward full at the detective, and Nick, perceiving that he was alone, disdained to make use of the weapon; moreover, he did not want to shoot the man.

Nick had only time to shout out one word of command to Burke before De Morney could get to him, and that was:

"Mind the ladies, Burke! Stay with them! Protect them! Take this gun!" and he tossed it in the air toward him.

The next instant, with a second savage cry, De Morney was upon him.

It was not the first time that these two had grappled, and each knew something of the strength of the other. Nick realized that he had no mean adversary, and De Morney knew that Nick Carter would prove more than a match for him unless he could bring some sort of strategy to his aid, or unless he could overcome the detective by a trick.

De Morney, in making the attack, resorted to a trick of jiu-jutsu, but Nick recognized it too soon for it to be available to his adversary; and then they came together in a regular old-fashioned clinching-match, in which each, the stronger could hope to conquer.

And they had the deck to themselves, with a tugboat on either side of them and with the crews of the tugs to watch in amazement this battle on the canal-boat.

De Morney tore and scratched and tried to bite. He bore his weight, which was considerable, down upon the detective. He tried to use his feet. He resorted to every known device he could remember, and at last he loosened one arm long enough to reach behind him in search of a knife, Nick had no doubt.

It was the loosing of that arm which gave the detective the advantage.

Instantly he changed his hold, lowered it until he had seized the Frenchman around the body, and then he lifted him from his feet and sought to throw him in that way.

But the Frenchman had resumed his hold, and the result was that they fell to the deck together; and then they rolled over and over, each time approaching nearer to the low rail that surrounded the deck of the boat.

When they reached it the Frenchman made one last terrific effort to regain his feet, and as he did so he managed to drag the detective with him, almost to an upright position, and then they both fell again—but this time it was not upon the deck that they fell, but over the rail into the water.

Sudden immersion in cold water is said to cool the ardor of all fighters, whether men or animals. Certain it is that as these two struck the water and sank from view, the Frenchman loosed his hold upon the detective, so that the latter struggled free from him.

Then, as they rose to the surface, facing each other, Nick struck out with his fist.

The count did not make an attempt to return the blow, which evidently did not hurt him.

Instead, he dived; and then, as he came to the water a few feet away, the detective saw him raise his hand and put something into his mouth.

Even as the man swallowed whatever it was that he had taken into his mouth the detective seized him again; but he saw instantly that he was too late, for with a shudder that seemed to shoot through his whole body, and with a grimace of pain on his face, Raoul de Morney's figure stiffened, a convulsion shook him for an instant, and he would have sunk to the bottom like a stone if Nick had not retained his hold upon him.

But the man was dead. There could be no doubt of

that; and the strong odor of bitter almonds in the air told only too well what he had swallowed—prussic acid.

A rope was thrown to Nick from the deck of the canal-boat by Burke, and after the body of Count Raoul de Morney had been drawn aboard Nick climbed up, also; and then the canal-boat was taken in tow by the tug he had hired and conveyed to the headquarters of the river and harbor squad of the police force.

Much to the surprise of the detective, he discovered that the canal-boat had doubtless been used as the permanent and regular home of De Morney and his former companion, Henri de la Pierre. Its interior was partitioned into cabins and fitted up with unusual elegance; but outwardly, at least, it was just an ordinary canal-boat.

Carmen Glenn and Clarice were not injured by their experiences, although they had both been choked almost to unconsciousness in the attack that De Morney made upon them in the house when he captured them and took them away by force. It was found, too, that O'Toole, the driver, had assisted in the attack, and he was sent to prison to think it over for a few years in quietude.

When Nick parted with Clarice that day at the door of the house where she lived with Carmen Glenn she said to him:

"You will come to see me again soon, will you not?"

"Yes," he replied, smiling. "Very soon, if you will permit it. The fact is, I badly need a lady assistant, and I am coming to ask you to be my——"

"Assistant," she interrupted him.

And he smiled and nodded his head—and went his way.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 529, will be "The Index of Seven Stars; or, Nick Carter Finds the Hidden City."

ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE

TIP TOP WEEKLY

We receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures, in every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 300 are entirely out of print. We would like to see the whole series of Frank and his friends published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 130 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give herewith a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine complete catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

MEDAL LIBRARY
AT 10 CENTS

150—Frank Merriwell's Schooldays.
169—Frank Merriwell's Chums.
178—Frank Merriwell's Foes.
184—Frank Merriwell's Trip West.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South.
193—Frank Merriwell's Bravery.
197—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
209—Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.
213—Frank Merriwell's Races.
217—Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.
225—Frank Merriwell's Courage.
229—Frank Merriwell's Daring.
233—Frank Merriwell's Athletes.
237—Frank Merriwell's Skill.
241—Frank Merriwell's Foreign Foes.
245—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.
249—Frank Merriwell's Secret.
253—Frank Merriwell's Danger.
257—Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.
261—Frank Merriwell in Camp.
265—Frank Merriwell's Opponents.
269—Frank Merriwell's Cruise.
273—Frank Merriwell's Close.
277—Frank Merriwell in Maine.
281—Frank Merriwell's Struggle.
285—Frank Merriwell's Nine Men.
289—Frank Merriwell's Opportunity.

MEDAL LIBRARY
AT 10 CENTS

293—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.
296—Frank Merriwell's Protégé.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road.
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company.
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame.
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums.
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem.
320—Frank Merriwell's Fortune.
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.
336—Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme.
340—Frank Merriwell in England.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
348—Frank Merriwell's Duel.
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.
356—Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories.
360—Frank Merriwell's Confidence.
364—Frank Merriwell's Auto.
365—Frank Merriwell's Fun.
368—Frank Merriwell's Generosity.
371—Frank Merriwell's Tricks.
374—Frank Merriwell's Temptation.
377—Frank Merriwell on Top.

AT 15 CENTS. (Increased Size)

380—Frank Merriwell's Luck.
383—Frank Merriwell's Skates.
386—Frank Merriwell's Reward.
389—Frank Merriwell's Dilemma.

STREET & SMITH, *Publishers*, NEW YORK CITY

The Nick Carter Weekly

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY. HANDSOMEST COLORED COVERS

No other detective library contains stories that are half so interesting. Nick Carter has been all over the world and has had experience with all kinds of criminals.

That's why, boys, his adventures holds one's interest from cover to cover. There is no brutality in Nick's make-up—he does not need it—he uses his wits. Do not fail to get the latest number from your newsdealer.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

505—The Man of Many Faces; or, Nick Carter Behind the Scenes.
506—A Letter From the Dead; or, Nick Carter's Proudest Moment.
507—Bare-faced Jimmy, the Gentleman Crook; or, Nick Carter's Amazing Experiment.
508—The Gentleman Crook's Last Act; or, Nick Carter and the Haunted House.
509—The "Skidoo" of the K. U. & T.; or, Nick Carter's Great Train Robbery Case.
510—The Last of the Outlaws; or, How Nick Carter Stopped the "Cannon-ball."
511—Nick Carter's Twin Mystery; or, The Secret of the Green Automobile.
512—A Battle of Wits; or, Nick Carter's Fight for Life.
513—A Game of Five Millions; or, Nick Carter's Fight With a Fiend.
514—Codman the Poisoner; or, Nick Carter's Strangest Experience.
515—The Plot of the Poisoner; or, Nick Carter's Hairbreadth Escape.
516—The Mechanical Giant; or, Ten-Ichi Plays a Lone Hand.
517—Dutch, the Unknown; or, Nick Carter's Blindfold Mystery.
518—A Dangerous Woman; or, Nick Carter Faces a Crisis.
519—Dodge Mosher's Ghost; or, Nick Carter's Deepest Stroke.
520—An Awful-like Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Bloodhound on the Scent.
521—The Mysterious Stranger; or, Nick Carter's Complex Case.
522—The White Arm of a Woman; or, Nick Carter's Desperate Chase.
523—The Man in the Doorway; or, Nick Carter's Conquest of a Castle.
524—The Plot of the Baron; or, Nick Carter's Telling Strategy.
525—The Passenger on the Night Local; or, Nick Carter's Perfect Disguise.
526—A Double Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Strong-hand Play.
527—Clarice, the Countess; or, Nick Carter's Motor-boat Chase.
528—Clarice, the Woman Detective; or, Nick Carter's Titled Assistant.
529—The Index of Seven Stars; or, Nick Carter Finds the Hidden City.
530—An Amazonian Queen; or, Nick Carter Becomes a Gladiator.
531—A Blackmailer's Paradise; or, Nick Carter Discovers the Hidden Hand.
532—Gipsy Madge, the Blackmailer; or, Nick Carter's First-class Bluff.
533—Facing an Unseen Terror; or, Nick Carter's Day of Blunders.
534—Idayah, the Woman of Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Fourfold Problem.
535—The Making of a King; or, Nick Carter Faces His Greatest Mystery.

If you want any back numbers of our libraries and cannot procure them from your newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK CITY.

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

ISSUED EVERY TUESDAY. **BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS**

Buffalo Bill wins his way into the heart of every one who reads these strong stories of stirring adventure on the wide prairies of the West.

Boys, if you want tales of the West that are drawn true to life, do not pass these by.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

278—Buffalo Bill's Daring Plunge; or, The Grisly Ghost of Mahoe.
279—Buffalo Bill's Desperate Mission; or, The Round-up in Hidden Valley.
280—Buffalo Bill's Ghost Raid; or, Hot Times at Bubble Pricking.
281—Buffalo Bill's Traitor Guide; or, The Vengeance of Alkali Pete.
282—Buffalo Bill's Camp-fires; or, The Bad Man of Snake River Crossing.
283—Buffalo Bill Up a Stump; or, The Pawnee Faker of the Bitter Root.
284—Buffalo Bill's Secret Foe; or, The Wizard of Windy Gulch.
285—Buffalo Bill's Master-stroke; or, The Specter of Death Valley.
286—Buffalo Bill and the Masked Mystery; or, Teton John, the Half-breed.
287—Buffalo Bill and the Brazos Terror; or, The Lone Star Outlaws.
288—Buffalo Bill's Dance of Death; or, The Night Hawks of Snake River.
289—Buffalo Bill and the Creeping Terror; or, The Black Spider of the Shoshones.
290—Buffalo Bill and the Brand of Cain; or, The Wandering Jew of the Plains.
291—Buffalo Bill and the Mad Millionaire; or, The Redskin Rovers.
292—Buffalo Bill's Medicine-lodge; or, The White Queen of the Kickapoos.
293—Buffalo Bill in Peril; or, The Red Amazons of the Niobrarah.
294—Buffalo Bill's Strange Pard; or, Wolfer Joe on the War-path.
295—Buffalo Bill in the Death Desert; or, The Worship of the Phantom Flower.
296—Buffalo Bill in No Man's Land; or, The Sky-mirror of the Panhandle.
297—Buffalo Bill's Border Ruffians; or, The Desperate Game of Panther Pete.
298—Buffalo Bill's Black Eagles; or, The Snake-master from Timbuctoo.
299—Buffalo Bill's Desperate Dozen; or, The Raiders of Round-Robin Ranch.
300—Buffalo Bill's Rival; or, The Scalp-hunter of the Niobrarah.
301—Buffalo Bill's Ice Chase; or, The Trail of the Black Rifle.
302—Buffalo Bill and the Boy Bugler; or, The White Flower of Fetterman Prairie.
303—Buffalo Bill and the White Specter; or, The Mysterious Medicine-man of Spirit Lake.
304—Buffalo Bill's Death Defiance; or, The Bad Men of Timber Bar.
305—Buffalo Bill and the Barge Bandits; or, The Demon of Wolf River Cañon.
306—Buffalo Bill, the Desert Hotspur; or, Pizen Jane, of Cinnabar.
307—Buffalo Bill's Wild Range Riders; or, The Vengeance of Crazy Snake.
308—Buffalo Bill's Whirlwind Chase; or, The Mustang Catchers of Bitter Water.
309—Buffalo Bill's Red Retribution; or, The Raid of the Dancing Dervishes.

If you want any back numbers of our libraries and cannot procure them from your newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK CITY.

BRAVE AND BOLD

ISSUED EVERY WEDNESDAY. BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

There are a large number of boys to whom stories about the same characters, week after week, become monotonous. It was to suit these fellows that we published BRAVE AND BOLD.

Each story is full 30,000 words in length and is complete in itself, having no connection with any that went before or will come after. Don't miss these.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

190—Captain Mystery; or, The Brave Girl of Boulder Bar. By Herbert Bellwood.

191—Silver Sallie; or, The Three Queer Pards of Poker Pocket. By J. C. Cowdrick.

192—The Ranch Raiders; or, Secret of the Golden Dagger. By Capt. Hal Hazelton.

193—A Baptism of Fire; or, At the Front With the Japs. By Mark Darran.

194—The Border Nomad; or, Sharper Stokes' Double Deal. By Herbert Bellwood.

195—Mark Mallory's Struggle; or, Friends and Foes At West Point. By Lieut. Fred Garrison, U. S. A.

196—A Strange Clue; or, The Sharks and Sharps of New York. By James Fisk.

197—Ranch Bob; or, The Boy Sleuth of Kansas. By Richard Traill.

198—The Electric Wizard; or, Through Air and Water to the Pole. By Emerson Bell.

199—Bob, the Shadow; or, Solving a Double Mystery. By Richard Hackstoff.

200—Young Giants of the Gridiron; or, Fighting For the Football Pennant. By Frank Merriwell.

201—Dick Ellis, the Nighthawk Reporter; or, The Biggest News "Beat" on Record. By Robert Reid.

202—Pete, the Breaker Boy; or, The Young Coal Mine Ferret. By Richard Hackstaff.

203—Young Maverick, the Boy From Nowhere; or, The Tenderfoot Oil King of Texas. By Sam Rusher.

204—Tom, the Mystery Boy; or, Trailed By a Secret Shadow. By Robert Reid.

205—Footlight Phil; or, From Call-boy to Star. By Manager Henry Abbott.

206—The Sky Smugglers; or, Gordon Keith's Great Balloon Chase. By Lawrence White, Jr.

207—Bart Benner's Mine; or, The Boy Who Got There. By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry.

208—The Young Ranchman; or, Bart Benner Going It Alone. By the author of "Bart Benner's Mine."

209—Bart Benner's Cowboy Days; or, The Young Hunter of the Big Horn. By the author of "Bart Benner's Mine."

210—Gordon Keith in Java; or, The Search for the Lost Wild Animal Taker. By Lawrence White, Jr.

211—Ned Hawley's Fortune; or, Lost in the Heart of New York. By Herbert Bellwood.

212—Under False Colors; or, Dick Dangerfield's Mystery. By Police Captain Manning.

213—Bags, the Boy Detective; or, Following a Warm Trail. By Richard Hackstaff.

214—On the Pampas; or, A Strange Chase Across South America. By Lawrence White, Jr.

215—The Crimson Clue; or, Dick Dangerfield's Mission. By Police Captain Manning.

216—At the Red Horse; or, Herr Driesbach, the Lion King. By Charles H. Day.

217—Rifle and Rod; or, A Cruise Down the Lake. By J. M. Merrill.

218—Pards; or, Comrades for Life. By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

219—Afloat with a Circus; or, The Diamond-seekers of Natal. By Henry L. Black.

220—Wide Awake; or, The Boys of the Bicycle Brigade. By Weldon J. Cobb.

221—The Boy Caribou Hunters; or, Treasure-trove of Hudson's Bay. By Charles B. Cross.

222—Westward Ho; or, The Cabin in the Clearing. By Henry L. Black.

223—Mark Graham; or, The Boy Wanderers of the Desert. By H. C. Emmet.

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. 190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of TIP TOP Nos.....

..... " " NICK CARTER Nos.....

..... " " DIAMOND DICK Nos.....

.....copies of BUFFALO BILL Nos.....

..... " " BRAVE AND BOLD Nos.....

..... " " ROUGH RIDER Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

THE ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY MONDAY. **HANDSOME COLORED COVER**

Ted Strong wants to make your acquaintance, boys, and we are convinced that you will be proud to have him as a friend. The tales of his adventures among the cowboys are full of fascinating interest. He is known to every one as "King of the Wild West" and he upholds the title.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, by the publishers upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

126—King of the Wild West's Strategy; or, Stella's Trick Pony.
127—King of the Wild West's Tangled Trail; or, The Disappearance of Stella.
128—King of the Wild West's Long Ride; or, Stella Lost on the Red Mesa.
129—King of the Wild West's Phantom; or, Stella in Danger.
130—King of the Wild West's Broncho-busters; or, Stella's Fort in the Coulée.
131—King of the Wild West's Corral; or, How Stella Brought the Warning.
132—King of the Wild West's Tenderfoot Pard; or, Stella's Surprise Party.
133—King of the Wild West's Night Wrangler; or, What Happened to Stella.
134—King of the Wild West's Outlaw; or, Stella to the Rescue.
135—King of the Wild West at the Throttle; or, Stella in the Flames.
136—King of the Wild West's Trail; or, Stella Finds Bill Blue.
137—King of the Wild West's Race; or, Stella Among the Seris.
138—King of the Wild West's Fire-signal; or, How Stella Foiled the Marauders.
139—King of the Wild West Rides the Line; or, Stella Saves Old Glory.
140—King of the Wild West's Treasure; or, Stella on the Walls of Montezuma.
141—King of the Wild West's Totem; or, Stella Makes a New Maxim.
142—King of the Wild West on the Box; or, Stella in the Mountains.
143—King of the Wild West's Slick Trick; or, Stella Buys a Town.
144—King of the Wild West on Vanishing Island; or, Stella Solves an Enigma.
145—King of the Wild West's Decision; or, Stella's Waif of the Plains.
146—King of the Wild West's Broken Cinch; or, Stella's Stratagem.
147—King of the Wild West's Iron Box; or, Stella Turns the Tables.
148—King of the Wild West's Lost Brand; or, Stella in "No Man's Land."
149—King of the Wild West's Snow Camp; or, Stella Lost in the Wilderness.
150—King of the Wild West's Great Wolf-hunt; or, Stella Conquers "White Fang."
151—King of the Wild West at the Lone Tree; or, Stella Finds the Mother Lode.

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. 190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of **TIP TOP**	Nos.....	.....copies of **BUFFALO BILL**	Nos.....
..... " " **NICK CARTER**	Nos.....	..... " " **BRAVE AND BOLD**	Nos.....
..... " " **DIAMOND DICK**	Nos.....	..... " " **ROUGH RIDER**	Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

THE FAVORITE LIST
OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES

Nick Carter Weekly

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest detective that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful power of fascination.

ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title. $100 in cash are given to the readers of this publication.

Buy a copy and learn how to come in for a share of it.

BRAVE AND BOLD

Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

MIGHT AND MAIN

These are stories of the adventures of boys who succeeded in climbing the ladder of fame by honest effort. No more interesting tales can be imagined. Each number is at least one-third longer than the ordinary five-cent library.

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.

The Tip Top Weekly

Frank Merriwell and his brother Dick are known and loved by over one hundred and fifty thousand of the best boys in the United States. They are both clean-cut, vigorous fellows who dare to do right no matter what the consequences. Get the current number. We are sure you will like it.